The development of British war aims : August 1914 - March 1915.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH WAR AIMS:

AUGUST 1914 - MARCH 1915

by

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The dissertation is divided into six chapters, there is also an introduction, a conclusion, and an appendix which consists of short biographical notes on the personalities mentioned in the narrative.

The Introduction outlines the main themes of the study, it includes a discussion of the sources used, and lists acknowledgements.

Chapter I examines the character of the decision-making process. In the early part of the First World War, war aims were decided in very much the same way as had been foreign policy before the war. Authority was concentrated in the hands of a small group of men surrounding the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. At the same time, the executive was able to use the overwhelming popular enthusiasm for the war to assert its independence from external influences.

Chapter II concerns Prussian militarism. Grey and his colleagues believed that the military advisers of the German Government had deliberately precipitated the war, and that they were the de facto rulers of Germany. The Foreign Secretary refused to consider making any peace which left the "Prussian military caste" in control of German policy and free to repeat its aggression.

Chapter III is about British war aims with regard to Western Europe. Britain went to war to protect her strategic interest in the independence of the North-West of Europe and to safeguard the naval position in Home Waters.

The peace settlement was to ensure that in years to come Western Europe would be free from the danger of further German attack. Germany was to evacuate and compensate Belgium; Alsace-Lorraine was to be restored to France; German naval power was to be greatly weakened.

Chapter IV explains British war aims with regard to Austria-Hungary. British interests are seen to lie in securing the safety of the west of Europe. Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe was entirely pragmatic: the future of the Habsburg Empire was used as a pawn to secure more immediate interests.

Chapter V is centred on the question of Constantinople and the Straits. Britain and Russia had few common interests; Grey tried to buy Russian co-operation and minimise Anglo-Russian differences with the offer of territorial expansion at the expense of Turkey.

Chapter VI explores British policy towards the German colonies. Britain neither wanted nor needed territorial aggrandisement, but there were strong arguments - mainly strategic - for retaining German colonies after the war. Moreover, France, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and the Union of South Africa laid claims to large parts of Germany's overseas Empire. These claims Britain could not refuse. Where Britain had a reasonably free hand, in German East Africa, policy tended to fluctuate according to the fortunes of war.

The main conclusion of this dissertation is that Britain fought for security: above all to prevent Germany from dominating Western Europe. However, the enormity of British interests, the diversity of her friendships, and the dislocating effects of war itself caused her to widen her objectives as the war went on.

INTRODUCTION

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The appearance of Professor Fischer's massive and controversial volume on the war aims of Imperial Germany[1] has done much to renew interest in the political issues of the First World War. Three years ago Mr.(now Professor) Joll, in drawing the attention of English-speaking historians to Fischer's work, observed that there were no similar studies of British war aims. He suggested that students in search of interesting and fruitful subjects for research could usefully turn their attention and energies to this neglected topic.[2]

Professor Joll's suggestion was as timely as it was encouraging, for it roughly coincided with the half-centenary of the outbreak of war in 1914. An anniversary doubly significant for historians for it was marked - albeit quite fortuitously - by the opening of the public archives. At the same time, many important collections of private papers, also tied to a fifty-year-rule, became generally available for the first time. It is largely on these primary materials that I have drawn in the preparation of this dissertation.

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The relevant documents at the Public Record Office fall into two categories: official papers; private papers.

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1 Fischer, F., Griff nach der Weltmacht (3rd Edition 1963).
2 Joll, J., The 1914 Debate Continues: Fritz Fischer and His Critics, Past and Present number 34, pp.100-113.

The official records of the various departments of State - the Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and so on - are virtually complete, and those very rare cases where documents are missing are almost certainly the result of some administrative oversight at the time.

Before the formation of Lloyd George's Government there were no Cabinet minutes taken. The historian has to rely on the Prime Minister's letters to the King - CAB.41. There are, however, minutes of the War Council - CAB.22. The War Council was a body of a rather chameleon-like nature; it stood mid-way between the Committee of Imperial Defence and the War Cabinet as it existed under Lloyd George. Cabinet memoranda are to be found under various classifications, but especially, CAB.24, CAB.29 and CAB.37.

The bulk of official Foreign Office correspondence is to be found in the political series - F.O.371. These files are absolutely indispensable sources for any study of the development of British foreign policy and attitudes towards the peace settlement. They contain a mine of information, and their sheer volume enables the student to form a very clear image of how the Foreign Office worked and of the various personalities involved. In footnoting F.O.371 references I have included jacket numbers but excluded file numbers. In their admirably edited volumes of British Documents on the Origins of the War, Professors Gooch and Temperley included file numbers. Since Gooch and Temperley performed their labours the Foreign Office files have been bound into

volumes, and the file number is now superfluous. Similarly, I have not included telegram numbers; given the volume number, the jacket number and the date of the telegram, the addition of a telegram number serves no useful purpose. The same method of footnoting has been adopted for the corresponding Colonial Office series - C.O.616.

The Public Record Office also houses several collections of private papers." The precise nature of distinction between private and official documents was often of political significance, and the question is considered inndetail in the body of this dissertation. The important collections of private papers are those of ministers and diplomats connected with the Foreign Office. These are all under the F.O.800 classification. By far the most useful of these collections is the Grey Papers; they constitute an invaluable complement to the F.O.371 series. The Carnock Papers contain a good deal of interesting information on Grey's rather sad and sickly Permanent Under Secretary. The Spring-Rice Papers and the Bertie Papers have little correspondence that cannot be found in the Grey Papers. Bertie was, however, in the habit of making personal memoranda on conversations with the Foreign Secretary, and was a compulsive chronicler of Foreign Office gossip: his records of both are of interest.

There are also some Kitchener Papers at the Public Record Office. These were extensively and efficiently used by Sir Philip Magnus in his brilliant biography of Kitchener,[1] and have little more to yield that is

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1 Magnus, Sir.P. Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist (Penguin 1968). All references to Magnus refer to this volume and this edition.

new.

Private collections of papers outside the Public Record Office may also be divided into two categories: those of men inside Government; those of men on the periphery - journalists, Members of Parliament, and radical critics of official policy.

The private papers of Cabinet ministers are for the most part disappointing. In wartime ministers spent a much greater proportion of their time in London and met very frequently; consequently there was less need to correspond. Moreover, it would seem that certain collections - Asquith Papers and the Lloyd George Papers - have been weeded. The only minister's papers which are not depressingly short of enlightening material are the Samuel Papers. Samuel's wife was in the country during the Sarajevo Crisis. Samuel wrote to her giving her lengthy daily accounts of Cabinet meetings. These letters (curiously overlooked by Samuel's biographer)[I] enable us to pinpoint far more closely than hereto the reasons for the Cabinet's decision to go to war.

Of greater interest than the papers of Cabinet ministers are the records of those who had accessto official information but who were not members of Government. In this respect journalists are particularly helpful. As trained reporters and observers, they took down what men in the Foreign Office and the Cabinet thought so obvious that it was not worth recording. C. P. Scott made extensive records of his conversations with his friends on the radical wing of the Cabinet - Simon, Lloyd George, Loreburn, Morley. The papers of St.Loe Strachey

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I. Bowle, J.E., Samuel (1957)

and J. A. Spender, and the letters of Sir Valentine Chirol tell us a good deal about the Foreign Office in this period.

The very extensive collections of papers of E. D. Morel and Arthur Ponsonby throw much light on the differences between the Government and its radical critics. While the former have been quite well worked, they still contain much undigested material.

The volume of published material is enormous. It may be considered under three headings; published documents; memoirs; secondary sources.

All the Great Powers and some of the lesser ones published series of documents on the origins of the war. Volumes X (in two parts) and XI of British Documents on the Origins of the War give a lengthy record of British foreign policy on the eve of the war. Only once or twice have I found documents that ought to have been included but were left out. It is a great pity that these excellent volumes have not yet been fully researched. On one point the British Documents are misleading; they exaggerate the importance of the anti-German mood in British foreign policy.[1] The overwhelming majority of the minutes are written by the anti-German group in the Foreign Office. Between 1912 and 1914 the anti-German group were out of favour. Grey, who wrote few minutes, and his most influential adviser, Sir William Tyrrell, who wrote practically none, were sympathetic towards Germany in this period. The Germanophobia of Nicolson and Crowe was by no means indicative of the direction of

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1 Sontag, R.J., Review Article on British Policy in 1913-1914, J.M.H. vol.10, pp.542-553, is in this author's opinion guilty of placing excessive emphasis on the influence of the anti-German group in the Foreign Office.

British policy, and this should have been explained in the introductions to these volumes. The French, Russian and German documents are useful for elaboration and cross-reference.

For the war years there are fewer collections of published documents. The Tsarist archives were published by their Bolshevik successors, and constitute an admirable and, as far as one can judge, very complete collection. Having no knowledge of Russian, I have drawn on the German translations of these documents. The Tsarist archives have been widely used by students of international and Russian history, and I have used them mostly to supplement points of narrative.

There are a huge number of political and diplomatic memoirs covering the First World War era. No short generalisation can cover them all. In certain cases memoirs can be of help: Harold Nicolson's description of the Foreign Office when he was a junior clerk is of exceptional merit,[1] and Lord Hankey's memoirs are also valuable.[2] For the most part I have found memoirs to be treacherous sources of reference. Even when they are not frankly polemical, they are, as often as not, marred by aberrations of memory and faulty emphasis. In many cases documents are printed in memoirs. This in itself is not as great a virtue as it seems: documents can mislead every bit as much as the narrative itself. To take one example, the published diaries of Lord Bertie:[3] these diaries are quite adequately edited, but they neglect to mention one very important fact,

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1 Nicolson, H., Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart., First Lord Carnock. A Study in the Old Diplomacy (1930). pp. 325-334.
2 Hankey, Viscount, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918. (1961).
3 Bertie, Viscount of Thame, The Diary, 1914-1918. (1924), edited by Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox.

Bertie was out of touch with the main stream of thought in the Foreign Office, and his views, far from being indicative of Grey's, were very frequently criticisms of Grey's policies. Certain historians have taken Bertie's views as being representative of official ideas, and in consequence they misunderstand the general direction and motives of British policy.[1]

There are many secondary sources on topics related to British war aims. Until recently scholars have not had access to the archives, and it would be in poor taste to level criticism from the basis of information which others have not had the good fortune to see. Where there is an accepted interpretation of an event with which I cannot concur, or where a writer has made a point which indirectly challenges the validity of my narrative, I endeavour to note, either in the text or in a short footnote, why I disagree.

This dissertation examines the development of British war aims in the early part of the First World War, roughly up to the Spring of 1915. My researches into the archives have covered a much broader period, in detail from 1912 to 1916, and an examination of the various committees on war aims in the second part of the war. Where there is a clear continuity of policy I have carried my narrative back into the pre-war era or further forward into the war.

The main theme of this study is that up to the Spring of 1915 war aims evolved very much as had foreign policy before the war. The focus

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1 e.g. Gottlieb, W.W., Studies in Secret Diplomacy during the First World War (1957).

of authority, the framework of the decision-making process, and the range of influences bearing on the formulation of policy were not greatly modified by the advent of war. There was a continuum in the conduct of Britain's foreign relations. In certain cases - policy towards the German Government, and policy towards Russia - it is impossible to understand the direction of British war aims unless one traces events through the Sarajevo crisis and into the war.

This dissertation is centred on Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary. It is for two reasons that Grey has been chosen as the focal personality: firstly, from the point of view of unity; secondly, because Grey was the most important figure in the debate on war aims in the early part of the Great War. But I have tried, and I hope successfully, to provide a balanced view of the several and various shades of opinion inside the British Government.

Policy towards the peace settlement was shaped by four parameters. Firstly, the conviction that the disturbers of the peace had to be punished, and that no settlement would be secure until this had been done. This meant that the German military party had to be removed from a position of power and influence, and their "militarist" ideals discredited. These aims could only be realized by Germany accepting that she had been defeated in the field. Secondly, the quest of security: by security was meant not so much a world in which war could not happen, but a world in which, if war did break out, Britain would be free from danger. From this principle certain needs naturally followed. In Europe, Belgium would have to be evacuated and France strengthened against the threat of further German aggression. At sea, German naval power would have to be so

reduced that she would not again renew her challenge to British naval supremacy. Outside Europe, where Russia, France and Japan were potentially as dangerous to the security of the Empire as was Germany, Britain planned as much against her friends as against her enemies. Thirdly, Britain fought in coalition with allies and the Dominions. She was to a large extent bound to find compensation in the peace settlement for Russia, France, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, and even Serbia. Fourthly, war aims were influenced by the military progress of the allies. Claims tended to expand when it was thought that the war would be brought to a triumphant conclusion, and to contract when visions of victory receded. During the first eight months of the war there was a rhythmic movement in war aims: up to the end of November, 1914, they were predicated on the assumption that Germany would be decisively defeated: from then onwards Grey became ever more pessimistic, and tried to bring the war aims of the allies into closer harmony with their capacities.

After the Spring of 1915 a whole new range of influences began to determine the course of Britain's foreign relations. Military demands and necessities became the most significant determinants of foreign policy: pre-war ideals, concepts and standards were all subordinated to the single end of winning the war. At the same time, the executive found its privacy disturbed by the vulgar clamour of public opinion, and its freedom of action limited by popular hysteria. Moreover, under the strain of war the fabric of international society was being rent beyond repair; habits of perspective

were distorted; all traditions of comity and order were being overthrown; familiar centres of power crumbled and fell; new forces, temporal and spiritual, often untried and untrusted, rose to replace them. In the face of such dynamic changes the continuity in Britain's foreign relations was broken. War aims had to embrace not only the problem of Britain's immediate interests, but the wider problems brought into being by the disturbances of war itself.

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I have received much help in writing this dissertation, and I am only sorry that I cannot give full thanks to all those who have been of assistance to me. I would like to thank Mr. M. E. Howard and Dr. W. Mendl for their patient, wise and kind supervision. Mr. D. C. Watt has helped me to clarify my ideas and approach; Professor J. Joll has offered much sensitive criticism. I am indebted to Dr. Zara Steiner on two counts: I have through conversation benefited from her unrivalled knowledge of the Foreign Office in the years before the First World War; she was also kind enough to read through parts of this manuscript for me. My friends Mr. John Gooch and Mr. Victor Rothwell have advised me on sources. Mrs. McLean typed my manuscript for me. Finally, and most of all, my parents have provided affection and shelter for three years when beneficence of the State was too limited to support my independence.

CHAPTER I

PERSONALITIES, INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORITY

This chapter examines the way in which war aims were decided in the early part of the First World War. It has been written with three ideas in mind. Firstly: the conviction that war aims were not simply the product of a decision-making process, they were a reflection of it: patterns of influence and traits of personality made their mark on the evolution of policy. Secondly: though attitudes towards the peace settlement could be usefully observed as intellectual history rather than political history, this study chooses to see them as the latter. Given this assumption, it is necessary to say where power and authority lay. Thirdly, if the historian does not precisely define the character of the decision-making system, he is opening the way for confusion, error and misunderstanding. Scholars have already attached excessive significance to Sir Francis Bertie and Sir Arthur Nicolson, and in doing so have misinterpreted the direction of British foreign policy in this period.[1] The only way of avoiding the repetition of such mistakes - and incidentally, of correcting the misconceptions that already exist - is explicitly to define the character of the decision-making process. Moreover, the weight of documents does not precisely reflect the weight of influence in the executive: it is, for example, much easier to piece together the views of a Foreign Office clerk than it is to establish the ideas of the Prime Minister. The student tries to correct this imbalance in the documentary material in his narrative, but it is not

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1 See Introduction and Chapter II.

always possible. To compensate for an inevitable element of distortion it is wise to explain patterns of authority and influence separately.

The central theme of this chapter is that a small number of men in the Foreign Office and the Cabinet decided the ends for which Britain was waging war. The Foreign Secretary, consulting with trusted friends and advisers, was in a position of overwhelming authority within the Executive. At the same time the Government was able to use the wave of popular enthusiasm for the war to assert its independence from pressure groups and criticism. For the first eight or nine months of the war those who plotted and executed the course of Britain's foreign relations found themselves with greater freedom of action than ever before.

2. The War and the Conduct of Foreign Policy.

The outbreak of war in August, 1914, though an occurence of quite singular drama, was not felt by the British Government to have marked a new era in the conduct of Britain's foreign relations. On the one hand, war was regarded as legitimate means of protecting and pursuing national interests; on the other, war was not looked upon as an activity fundamentally different from any other national enterprise.

In a world without supranational authority, international violence was considered, even in a Cabinet that was reluctant to use war as an instrument of national policy, to be a final and necessary arbiter when the interests and sovereignties of states were irreconcilable. The long and intense preparation for war had made it an implicit idea in the

minds of men, and an accepted characteristic in the affairs of nations. A series of international crises had anticipated the events of July, 1914; the conduct of war had been rehearsed in the war games of soldiers and sailors; the nature of forthcoming conflicts considered in the deliberations of the Committee of Imperial Defence. In the Foreign Office[1] and the Cabinet[2] existing military arrangements and long cherished strategic principles made the transition from peace to war inexorably logical.

Yet, while war was an integral part of men's ideas, there was no complete vision of a total war: an engine of social and political mobility that generated its own values and its own purposes. It was hoped, though with varying degrees of optimism, that the ideals of society and the existing nature of government would prove equal to the demands of war. Liberals, for all their hatred of war, were slow to see its wider implications. They were much too bourgeois to imagine a station of affairs that departed far from the world they knew. War was not viewed as an organic reality, but rather as a condition of non-peace.

Britain had not experienced a large-scale modern war, and there was an excessive faith in the capacity of sea-power to insulate the nation from the disturbances of such conflicts. Europeans, with land frontiers, could study the grim pages of Clausewitz to their hearts' content, but for Englishmen it was Mahan who had spelled out the immutable laws which regulated the struggles of great naval empires. Britain waged war at sea, and only supplemented the land forces of her allies with a small

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1 Memorandum by Crowe, 31.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 369; H.Nicolson, pp.417-419.
2 Chapter 3.

expeditionary force. Her enemies, cut off from world markets, would face economic strangulation and financial ruin. Britain, whose navy controlled the seas, was in no such danger: she was bound to lose much of her European trade because the belligerents would have little to buy or to sell, but elsewhere commerce would continue as it had done. On 3 August, 1914, Grey told the Commons:

> "For us, with a powerful fleet, which we believe able to protect our commerce, to protect our shores, and to protect our interests, if we engaged in war, we shall suffer little more than we shall suffer even if we stand aside."[1]

The cry "Business as usual" was more than an adroit piece of propaganda, it epitomised an attitude towards war itself.

Neither was it felt that the cost of fighting the war would be ruinously expensive. The financial burden of a war at sea was largely a matter of capital expenditure on ships, and this investment had been made already.

> "The naval war will be a cheap one," Churchill assured Lloyd George, "not more than twenty five millions a year."[2]

Twenty five millions was only half as much again as a normal year's naval estimates.

Men had no grasp of the sheer size and scale of the adventure upon which they had embarked. Even taking into account Rupert Brooke's rather silly nature, could he have written: "Now God be thanked Who matched us against His hour," if he had had any idea of the nature of modern war? In the same vein, Asquith could also see war as a release from the burdens of peace: writing (in March , 1915):

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1 Speech by Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons on August 3, 1914, quoted in Grey, Viscount of Folloden, Twenty-Five Years (1925), vol.II, p.306.

2 Churchill to Lloyd George, undated, c.2.viii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C./13.

> "The same luck which helped you (Asquith himself) in external things - in unforeseen opportunities, in disappearance of possible competitors, in the special political conditions of your time: above all (at the critical and fateful moment in your career) in the sudden outbreak of the Great War."[1]

Even so-called visionaries had no inkling of the enormity and dynamism of the war. In the Autumn of 1914, Norman Angell wrote:

> "Suppose that the Allies kill in this war a quarter of a million German soldiers (which is a very large estimate)."[2]

Curiously the only men who seem to have had some intuitive insight into the coming vastness and destructiveness of the war were Kitchener[3] and Grey, who were not usually noted for their imagination. The former saw something of the military dimensions of the war, the latter perceived the political, social and economic disintegration that the conflict would precipitate.

This inability to see that war was a condition fundamentally different from peace applied as much to questions of foreign policy as in other areas of state activity.

The idea that the war was total - in the sense that the distinction between friends and enemies was absolute - was put to the Government but it was not accepted by it.[4] It was not held that all interests should be subordinated to the single task of winning the war. The military conflict remained something that ran side by side with existing

1 Jenkins, Rt.Hon.R., Asquith (Fontana 1967), p.374. The reference is, of course, to Ireland.
2 Angell, N., Shall This War End German Militarism? (1915), p.4.
3 Magnus, p.339.
4 e.g. On the question of Japan entering the war, Minute by Crowe, 10.viii.1914, and Minute by Grey, undated, c.10.viii.1914, F.O.371/2168/37529.

conceptions and attitudes towards foreign policy. There was a military and/a political arm of Britain's foreign relations: the one was moved by the simple consideration of defeating the enemy; the other was evolved from principles at once more diffuse and complex. The war was but a crude articulation of the preoccupations and subtleties of foreign policy.

Tensions between Britain and her allies continued much as they had done before the war. Only over the necessity of restoring the strategic balance to the west of Europe can relations between Britain and her allies be said to have been significantly more in harmony than between Britain and her foes. In many areas Britain still looked to tacit support from Germany to ward off threats from France, Russia, and in Africa even from Belgium. When the French suggested that the German and Austrian charges d'affaires be expelled from Tangier, it was noted in the Foreign Office that:

> "We must remember that to adopt the French proposal will tie our hands in the future, when we may want Germany's support to maintain the internationalization of Tangier."[1]

As the coming of war brought with it no sudden change in attitudes towards the conduct of Britain's foreign relations, there was no immediate modification in the institutional framework within which foreign affairs were conceived. War was a rational and controllable means of protecting and pursuing political interests, and the ends of war were not held to be different from the ends of foreign policy. War aims evolved within the framework of day-to-day conduct of foreign affairs. Authority and influence over war aims was felt to be a matter for those who had

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1 Minute by Clerk, 13.viii.1914, F.O.371/2050/38811.

always charted the course of Britain's foreign relations.

3. Sir Edward Grey.

In the early part of the war Sir Edward Grey, and those in the Foreign Office and Cabinet who were close to him, virtually decided British war aims. It is therefore worth pausing and considering the character of the central figure in this history.

Grey has been harshly treated by historians. The general concensus is that he was a well-intentioned, virtuous, and rather slow-witted man. This view has been accepted by both his admirers[1] and his critics[2] though what the one calls honourable statesmanship, the other deems to be priggish insularity. Recently there has been a new wave of research on the foreign policy of the Grey era: when these researches have been digested scholars will (no doubt) take stock of Grey's character and career. There will probably be some reappraisal. On the most obvious level, we will know more about his foreign policy. On another elevation, it will emerge that Grey was a statesman of greater subtlety, complexity, intelligence and deviousness than has heretofore been believed.

Grey's character is best understood by seeing it as the construct of two sorts of influence; the nature of his background; the idiosyncrasies of his own personality.

The values instilled into Grey in his boyhood and youth were formidable influences in later life. Some men (and Asquith was an outstanding example) manage to bury the values of their formative years beneath the acquired tastes of maturity. Grey never had much experience; his faith in the ideals he had been brought up to respect grew more unshakeable with age. He rarely travelled and had no first-hand knowledge of foreign

1 Trevelyan, G.M. Grey of Fallodon (1937).
2 Albertini, L., The Origins of the War of 1914, translated by Massey, Isabella, M., (1953), vol.II, p.197.

countries or alien cultures. Before the outbreak of war, he had only been out of the country twice in his life. Once, when he was a young man, he went to India. It would seem that this adventure was not much to his liking, and twenty-five years passed before he again ventured abroad, accompanying King George V on his State Visit to France in the Spring of 1914. There can hardly have been a statesman of the modern era (save Hitler) who had travelled less than Grey. He passed life from beginning to end within the same society as he had grown up. His knowledge even of the English working class was quite limited, and (unlike Asquith) he did not move in the more outré spheres of upper class society. Middle age found Grey to be a true believer in the values of the English public school. He rated integrity and honesty far above intelligence and wit, and considered that in the long run the activities of men and nations would be judged and rewarded according to their virtues:

> "He dismissed me," remembered Sir Francis Oppenheimer, "with an impressive warning: Whatever your work may be in Holland, whatever arguments you may propose, never forget that we are making history. Do not allow yourself to be tempted by any temporary advantage. Remember always that what might seem an advantage under the circumstances of the present war may on some future occasion be quoted against us."[1]

He never fully accepted, or even understood, that the conventions which ordered relations between English gentlemen were not fully applicable in international society. "Foreign statesmen," he once observed, "ought to receive their education at an English public school."[2]

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1 Oppenheimer, Sir F., Stranger Within (1960), p.240.
2 Quoted in Nicolson, p.311.

For Grey the man who lied in the course of diplomacy and the man who deceived his friend were the same types, they were equally morally responsible and degenerate. After ten years at the Foreign Office, he was still capable of expressing shock when he found that the Chancelleries of Europe were not staffed by men of impeccable character.[1] By the same token, Grey tended to take the word of a foreign statesman at face value, in just the same way as he would have done with anyone in the ordinary intercourse of life.[2]

This moralising strain did not mean that Grey was any less devoted to upholding British interests than was Salisbury, Lansdowne or Balfour, but it did give to his personality and to his policy a very distinctive atmosphere.

> "Well anyway," Churchill once remarked, "we know if the Germans were here and said to Grey, If you don't sign this Treaty, we will shoot you at once, he would certainly reply, It would be most improper for an English Minister to yield to a threat, that sort of thing is not done!"[3]

There was another side of Grey's background that influenced his outlook. Grey was a Whig: his grandfather, Sir George Grey, had been a colleague of Gladstone; by virtue of his family's ascendency in Northumberland he had secured a safe Parliamentary seat at the age of 23. His political attitudes were those of a nineteenth century Whig, and he had little in common with the commercial middle classes. His ideas were not deduced from the rigid precepts of laissez-faire dogma.

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.26.1.1915, F.O.371/2505/9523.
2 See Chapter 2.
3 Churchill, W.S. Great Contemporaries (1937), pp.85-6.

Indeed for Grey trade remained an activity that debased the spirit. When Churchill proposed a course of action that he considered dishonourable, he replied that the question could not be considered "as a commercial bargain".[1] It was the Whig rather than the imperialist strand in his outlook that was the most permanent feature of his attitude towards foreign affairs. He looked at problems in a detached and matter-of-fact way: his conscious thought was moved by no abstract doctrines.

Grey was an immensely shy and private man. Margot Asquith, who prided herself on her understanding of eminent political characters, (and who Grey must have found a most unnerving companion), admitted that she was a little baffled by him:

> "There is something lonely, lofty and even pathetic about him which I could not easily explain."[2]

Arthur Ponsonby, one of his most forthright opponents, noted just the same thing:

> "He is aloof and rather unapproachable which makes a certain mystery that attracts."[3]

The Foreign Secretary had few friends; he had very little contact with London Society; he shunned "Clubland" and other urban pleasures. His residence in London (during the war he rented Churchill's house on Eccleston Square) was modest; he did not even keep a butler. It was the home of a suburban solicitor, not that of the wealthy offspring of a Whig family. His country house - Falloden - though no doubt opulent by

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1 War Council Meeting, 28.1.1915, 6:30 P.M., CAB.22/1.
2 Asquith, Margot, Autobiography, edited by Mark Bonham Carter (1962), p.253.
3 Character Sketch of Grey, (1912) by A.Ponsonby, in possession of Lord Ponsonby. Hereafter all references to papers of Arthur Ponsonby that are in the possession of Lord Ponsonby will be referred to as the Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

modern standards, was hardly comparable with the magnificent residences of a Harcourt or a Rosebery. It was a sober and parochial house of a sober and parochial landowner.

Grey's relaxations were simple and rural: he loved the countryside, fishing and bird-watching. At times it would almost seem that he preferred birds to people. His only substantive suggestion for the Versailles settlement was a proposal that Heligoland be turned into a bird sanctuary.[1] When other ministers went off to country houses for the weekend, Grey would go to his cottage in the New Forest and, as Harold Nicolson put it,

> "murmur Wordsworth to himself while studying the habits of the birds and the fishes."[2]

Shyness and aloofness were concealing frailty rather than strength. Asquith, who was a better judge of character than his wife, perceived an underlying weakness in Grey:

> "McKenna and I had a walk and talk about persons and particularly about courage..... I found we didn't differ much, both making ..... Grey too nervy to be put really high."[3]

Asquith had understood the Foreign Secretary; Grey's weakness was not a physical or a moral cowardice, it was the weakness of an insecure personality. Lloyd George, who had an uncanny instinct for other men's frailties, also sensed Grey's silent exterior was the cloak for a very nervous character.[4] Bertie observed that Grey lacked the strength of

1 Grey to Balfour, 3.vi.1919, Balfour Papers, add:49731.
2 Nicolson, H., King George V: His Life and Reign (Pan, 1967), p.149. Unless otherwise stated all footnote references to H.Nicolson refer to his Lord Carnock.
3 Jenkins, p.377.
4 Lloyd George, D., War Memoirs (1933), vol.I, pp.90-99.

personality to control his own civil servants:

> "Grey is a weak man, and having refused Nicolson's application for Constantinople and Vienna could not make up his mind to make a third refusal."[1]

Grey's lack of self-confidence manifested itself in a number of ways. It produced an excessive dislike of argument, and a disturbing habit of telling people what they wanted to hear and concealing from them what they would object to. His systematic failure to confide in the Cabinet and the intense confusion over the implications of the Anglo-French Entente must in part be put down to Grey's own predilliction for avoiding trouble. It also led to a very distinctive pattern of influence within the executive: the men who had Grey's confidence were those who were personally sympathetic towards him. In his conduct of foreign policy, the Foreign Secretary was extremely sensitive to threats and dangers, and he was liable to react excessively to them. Moreover, Grey had an almost neurotic fear that his motives would be misunderstood, that he would be suspected of duplicity and intrigue.

Grey always found his responsibilities to be a mental and emotional strain. Unlike Asquith, who could shut himself off from his work, or Churchill, who found that tension released new springs of energy within him, for Grey duties remained an unremitting burden. He was(throughout his life) introverted and self-absorbed. His own morbid fascination with the miseries of his own situation consumed an inordinate amount of his

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 25.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/153.

time and mental energies: this may well have been the form of relaxation that he most persistently indulged. Shortly before the outbreak of war, he complained of his need for rest and that he had not been able to visit his home in Northumberland for months.[1] The burdens and demands of office grew more exacting during the war. Grey had many noble qualities, but cheerfulness in adversity was not one of them. He had a self-pitying streak that is easy to understand but difficult to admire. His mental attitude is captured in a letter to Bertie, written in March, 1915.

> "I feel I ought to do more, in writing to you and to keep you in touch privately with what is going on here. But the work is very heavy in the Foreign Office, with an infinity of trouble about Contraband, besides matters of Foreign Policy. I have to attend every Cabinet meeting and War Council, and frequent consultations with other Ministers. The result is that it is all I can do to get through my days work, and as a rule I have not an ounce of energy or a minute of time left for anything extra."[2]

Little wonder that Asquith could complain;

> "E.Grey (as usual) was most dolorous and despondent."[3]

All Grey's problems were dwarfed by his growing blindness. At the beginning of 1914 he had learned that his sight would deteriorate and that he would eventually face near total blindness. His doctors suggested the rather dubious sounding treatment of giving up smoking. While this somewhat severe regime was no doubt beneficial for his lungs,

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 16.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/161.
2 Grey to Bertie, 5.iii.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177.
3 Jenkins, p.382.

it failed in its prime objective, restoring his sight. He made plans to go to Germany to be treated by a famous oculist, but for obvious reasons these plans never came to maturity.[1] It is difficult to say how poor Grey's sight was during the war. One can observe a certain looseness in his handwriting, but this author is inclined to suspect that his sight was not quite as bad as either he or his biographer said it was. On the other hand, the secondary effects of the weakness of his vision were very important. It made him depressed and sapped his energy: this was probably more significant than the failure of his vision. During the war years there was a gradual breakdown in Grey's health.

In April, 1915, Lord Esher noted:

> "all Ministers look older, some wrecks."[2]

Grey was one of the wrecks. Shortly afterwards, Esher wrote:

> "Edward Grey's appearance shocked and distressed me. His eyes grow dimmer and he sleeps only a few hours at night. When he wakes he manages to work with a strong light and he drops off to sleep early in the morning. I am afraid his health will not last out the war."[3]

The cause of Grey's insomnia seems to have been a sustained dialogue with his own conscience about his part in the events of July, 1914. Grey[4] himself and Lord Hankey[5] have referred to his preoccupation with

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1 Grey, vol.II, pp.59-60.
2 Esher to Bertie, 27.iv.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.
3 Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher (1934-1938), edited by M.V.Brett and Oliver, Viscount Esher, vol.III, pp.298-299.
4 Grey, vol.II, p.47.
5 Hankey, Viscount, The Supreme Command (1961), vol.I, p.185.

this issue. This was, as we shall see, not without influence on the direction of his war aims.

There is something very sad about Grey's situation during the war. Day after day spent between the Foreign Office and a lonely house on Eccleston Square, his health worn out by infirmity and the responsibilities of office. Perhaps most terrifying of all is an image of a man, tortured by conscience and unable to sleep, peering through powerful lenses at Foreign Office documents by his bedside.

It has frequently been asserted that Grey was unintelligent, but there is no evidence to indicate that this was so. His mental processes were of an intellectual, almost aesthetic kind. In the best Whig tradition he was free from pettiness and took a broad view of events. His sensitivity had its good as well as its damaging features. He was often more aware of possible pitfalls and dangers than his colleagues and advisers, and he had a rare capacity for insight and vision. Few men sensed as strongly as did Grey that the war would bring in its wake political, social and economic upheaval on a scale never before experienced.[1] Likewise he saw that peace would bring its own problems. In December, 1914, he wrote to Kitchener:

> "I hear you are concerning yourself with regard to the future of your soldiers when they are disbanded, after the war. I am not surprised. It is obvious that there will be many thousands who will not be content to return to the humdrum conditions of their old life, and unless proper provision is made for their employment they may constitute a social and political menace."[2]

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1 Grey to De Bunsen, 23.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 86; Mensdorff to Berchtold, 7.vii.1914, quoted in Grey, II, pp.233-234.

2 Grey to Kitchener, 19.xii.1914, Kitchener Papers, P.R.O.30/55/177.

Such prescience shows why Grey, while not a great statesman, had qualities that raised him above the ordinary.

4. Asquith and Grey.

The political ties between Asquith and Grey extended back over a quarter of a century. Though, as Haldane to his cost found out, longevity was not the yardstick by which Asquith judged merit. Indeed, Asquith and Grey were not close personal friends, Asquith tended to be irritated by Grey's sickly body and brooding mind, and Grey rarely figured amongst the guests at the endless round of festivities at the Asquith household.[1] It can be surmised that Grey, who complained that H.G.Wells was a "very oversexed writer for everything presented itself to him from that angle,"[2] was more than a little puzzled by some of Asquith's fascinations, and his habit of writing to young ladies during Cabinet meetings.

None-the-less, the basis of their political partnership was very sound. Asquith knew he could not afford to dispense with Grey in the same way as he did with Haldane and Churchill. Grey had a large personal following in the country, and could draw on solid support from the Whig and the Imperialist wing of the Party. In August, 1914, Asquith made it quite clear that if Grey resigned, then he would also go.[3] Later, in May, 1915, when he was forming the Coalition Government, and when Grey's sight was so poor that it was interfering with his work at the Foreign Office, Asquith could easily have used this as an excuse for

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1 Jenkins, pp.301 and 382.
2 Haldane, Elizabeth, From One Century to Another (1937), p.255.
3 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

ridding himself of his Foreign Secretary. It is hard to believe that Asquith, a butchering Prime Minister of a high order,[1] did not consider the possibility and reject it.

Grey and Asquith were in agreement on all major issues of foreign policy.[2] According to Hankey, who at that time knew Grey and Asquith very well:

> "He (Grey) never acted without consulting the Prime Minister, and the closest of liaison was maintained between the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street, by a trusted Foreign Office official, Eric Drummond."[3]

Asquith was the only member of the Cabinet who was scrupulously circulated with all important despatches.[4] The Prime Minister, for his part, had a high regard for Grey's intelligence and capacities,[5] and conceiving his own role to be that of a judge and arbiter, he had no inclination to meddle in the everyday business of the Foreign Office. The two men worked together without discord.

5. Asquith.

Asquith's ability as a Prime Minister in war time has been the subject of much comment and even greater speculation. The controversy has revolved around two quite different views of Asquith. The one has seen Asquith as a great and honourable Prime Minister in the nineteenth century tradition;[6] Asquith as the "Last of the Romans". The other claims that

1 For a new and very interesting account of the fall of the Liberal Government in May, 1915, see Koss, S.E., The Destruction of Britain's Last Liberal Government, J.M.H. vol.40,ii. Jenkins, p.435.
2 e.g. Oxford and Asquith, Earl of, Memories and Reflections (1928),p.69.
3 Hankey, vol.I, pp.184-185.
4 The circulation lists on documents indicate who was being shown what. Whether Asquith read all he was shown is another matter.
5 Jenkins, p.382.
6 Asquith, C., and Spender, J.A., Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith (1932).

he was ineffectual, lazy and corrupted; classical only in the Olympian dimensions of his vices. There is some truth in both views of Asquith.[1]

Asquith possessed quite extraordinary gifts: he had a capacity for quick and efficient work; for marshalling ordered, considered and powerful argument; and exceptional qualities of judgement. These attributes, and tolerable quantity of good fortune, took Asquith from a lowly background to highest office in the land.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that there was a certain decline in Asquith's powers in the second half of his political career. His marriage to his second wife, the irrepressible Margot, marked a change in both his interests and his conduct. Asquith became very much the bon vivant, who loved frivolous company, especially when it was young and female. A contemporary somewhat disrespectfully described him as:

> "an old jelly boy run by an ambitious female (his daughter)."[2]

Lytton Strachey, after one encounter with the Prime Minister in 1916, recorded his impressions:

> "I studied the old man with extreme vigour, and he really is a corker. He seemed larger than when I last saw him (just two years ago) - a fleshy, sanguine, wine-bibbing, medieval Abbot of personage - a glutinous, lecherous, cynical old fellow - oogh!"[3]

But it is all too easy to exaggerate; there is no necessary connection

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1 The debate continues, see Mr.G.L.C.Hazlehurst's letter to the Times Literary Supplement, 19.vi.1969.
2 B.Mallet to Strachey, 8.xi.1914, amongst papers of St.Loe Strachey, formally in the possession of The Spectator.
3 Holroyd, M., Lytton Strachey (1968), vol.II, p.197.

between men's interests in private life and their capacities to fulfil their duty as servants of the State. This is especially so with Asquith, who had an umusually orderly intellect. Unlike Grey, who found the burdens of office worried him to the point of nervous collapse, Asquith had no trouble shutting problems out of his mind. In matters of foreign policy, the view put forward by Jenkins in his fascinating biography of Asquith, that given Asquith's view of his duties he remained a competent Prime Minister, holds good. On important issues he nearly always gave his advice, and this was sensible and usually decisive.

It is difficult to estimate Asquith's influence on Grey's policy. His contacts with the Foreign Secretary were so close that little went down on paper. It would seem that ideas originated in the Foreign Office, and were then agreed to by the Prime Minister.

6. Haldane.

Haldane was much closer to Grey than was Asquith. Haldane and Grey had known one another since the middle of the 1880's, and Grey was a frequent visitor at Haldane's house on Queen Anne's Gate. For Grey, a childless widower, Haldane's home, run by spinster sister, Elizabeth, was the nearest thing he knew to the comforts of home life. Between July and September, 1914, Grey was living with the Haldanes.[1]

There was a genuine bond of friendship between the two men. It was to

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1 Haldane, p.270.

Haldane that Grey turned for comfort when his wife died:

> "I just want one friend.... with whom I can cry from time to time."[1]

Grey found in Haldane a source of sympathetic support and understanding, and the attacks made upon Haldane during the war caused Grey real anxiety.[2] Grey's failure to stand by Haldane in May, 1915, is less a reflection of the quality of their friendship, than an insight into Grey's very healthy political ambition.[3]

For Haldane, who was becoming a rather fussy old bachelor, and who almost certainly realised he commanded little respect from the younger members of the Cabinet[4] and even less in the country, his friendship with Grey was of obvious personal and political value. There must have been many occasions when, perhaps after one of Haldane's fine dinners, the two men debated the issues and purposes of the war.

At the beginning of their political careers Haldane and Asquith had been the closest of comrades. They were both middle class, ambitious, clever, and rather dull young barristers. Though Haldane was not

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1 Grey to Haldane, 5.11.1906, Haldane Papers, M.S.5906.
2 Grey to Lord Derby, 25.1.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/107.
3 Haldane never forgave Grey for deserting him in May, 1915. He made some typically subtle innuendos, hinting that Grey's incompetence was responsible for the war. "If Germany meant our destruction it was by a simpler and more legitimate means than that of fighting..... It (the war) arose I think, out of Eastern politics, over which we were not too intelligent." Haldane to Balfour, 8.viii.1918, Balfour Papers, add.49724.
4 Memorandum by Scott, 3-4.ix.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.

educated at Balliol, he was very much a Balliol man, and with Asquith shared a common interest in the political philosophy of one of Asquith's former teachers, T.H.Green, the Balliol philosopher.[1] As their careers advanced, Haldane and Asquith drew apart, and by 1914 had few social contacts.[2] Asquith began to prefer more elevated and less severe society, and he must have found Haldane's unbending urbaneness a little trying. While Asquith and Haldane had similar backgrounds and careers, their intellectual interests were different. Haldane's bias was to German philosophy; Asquith's to classical studies: the one revelled in abstractions; the other retained a healthy Anglo-Saxon distrust of them. Asquith never reached Campbell-Bannerman's stage of referring to Haldane as Schopenhauer, but he got close to it. Haldane was "diffuse" and "nebulous", he complained after one Cabinet meeting.[3]

Throughout the autumn, winter and spring of 1914-1915, Grey continued to discuss policy with his two oldest political comrades. The triumverate of the Relugas House Compact was in a metamorphised form still in existence. There were two main differences: it was Grey rather than Haldane who was the axis of the group; the group now constituted the more moderate wing of the Cabinet. During the war the former radical-pacifists adopted imperialist attitudes, while the former imperialists assumed the role of the pacifists. Harcourt, Lloyd George and Churchill came out strongly in favour of imperial expansion and a firm foreign policy; Grey, Haldane and Asquith did not want to extend the Empire and

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1 Richter, M., The Politics of Conscience: T.H.Green and his Age.(1964)
2 Jenkins, p.301.
3 Jenkins, p.366.

were more moderate in their views.

7. Grey and the Cabinet.

While Grey's position in the Cabinet tended to weaken as the war went on, it was built on such secure foundations that he remained an influential, and almost indispensable, member of Asquith's Government. He was the scion of a powerful Whig family, and was the representative of that wing of the Party in the Cabinet. He also commanded respect on both sides of the House, and enjoyed an enormous reputation in the country and abroad. Grey's image is perhaps best described by one of his fiercest critics:

> "Grey is in some ways the most interesting figure in the Cabinet. To begin with he is a gentleman in the best sense of the word. Personal ambition and a desire to advertise himself, I don't suppose he has felt for a single instant. This makes him a sharp contrast to many of his colleagues. His House of Commons manner has been a great service to him. It is very sincere, dignified and correct."[1]

Such a reputation for honesty and simplicity was a powerful asset in a Cabinet noted neither for its sobriety nor its integrity.

The Cabinet records are too slight to say with any complete certainty how much Grey did or did not take the Cabinet into his confidence. From that evidence which does exist, it would appear that Grey told the Cabinet as little as possible.

It is well-known that Grey did not like consulting the Cabinet on

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1 Character sketch of Grey, 1912, by A.Ponsonby, in the possession of Lord Ponsonby, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

delicate matters, and the case of Anglo-French military talks is notorious. After the Agadir crisis the situation did improve: it was agreed that all important matters would be referred to the Cabinet,[1] and for a short time a Cabinet committee on foreign affairs was established.[2]

With the coming of war, Grey reverted, and with renewed vigour, to all his old habits of secrecy and furtiveness. The most spectacular case of Grey acting without the sanction of his colleagues was over the question of offering Cyprus to Greece. The matter was discussed in some detail in January, 1915, when it had been hoped to use Greek troops in conjunction with the naval expedition against the Dardanelles. On that occasion Kitchener had stremuously objected, and Grey promised that no offer would be made without the prior consent of the Cabinet.[3] In October of the same year, Lord Crewe, reporting the events in the Cabinet to the King, wrote:

> "It was next asked how it came about that the cession of Cyprus to Greece, an integral part of His Majesty's Dominions, had been promised in certain contingencies without the previous consent of the Cabinet."[4]

In other matters, equally significant though far more difficult to supervise, the general drift, direction and objects of policy, Grey seems to have kept his own counsel and confided only in Haldane and Asquith.

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1 Memorandum by Scott, 23-24.x.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
2 There were no minutes of this Committee: there are some records in the Grey Papers, F.O.800/100.
3 Grey to Kitchener, 19.1.1915, Kitchener Papers, P.R.O.30/55/77. Kitchener's attitude is perhaps understandable: he had spent two years of his life surveying in Cyprus.
4 Crewe to King George V, 22.x.1915, CAB.41/36.

Grey was able to circumvent the authority of the Cabinet for two main reasons. Firstly, the very nature of foreign policy, a continual executive process requiring detailed and expert information, made it very difficult to supervise. Secondly, the Foreign Office had a near monopoly of foreign communications. This monopoly not only meant that it could control all messages; it also legitimised what was sent. Grey resorted to a number of strategems to reap the maximum advantage from his position.

In theory, the Cabinet did have a check of the Foreign Secretary's abuse of the Foreign Office's communications monopoly. Ministers had the right to see all official despatches. In practice, this was not quite the advantage that it seemed. Ministers were not privy to the detailed discussion of policy in the Foreign Office, nor did they see departmental minutes, nor had they the right to see private correspondence.

Grey used private correspondence as a means of avoiding the Cabinet's supervision. Private letters and telegrams were to all intents and purposes official communications between the Foreign Secretary and one of Britain's diplomatic representatives abroad; they went through the diplomatic bag or the Foreign Office cypher; there was never so much as an enquiry after the recipient's health or well-being. A letter from Grey to Asquith, written in 1910, leaves us with a very clear picture of how Grey was using private correspondence to keep matters out of the hands of the Cabinet:

> "Here are the German negotiation papers. I send them with minutes but please bear in mind that these ought not to be shown outside F.O. I should like them back as soon as possible. I shall dictate a private letter to Goschen (the Ambassador at Berlin) when I return to London and will show that to you before it is sent. The whole subject we can discuss when we meet and eventually at the Cabinet."[1]

When Anglo-French military conversations began, Grey had told Campbell-Bannerman that matters would be discussed with the Cabinet "eventually".[2] In that case "eventually" meant an unavoidable breach of secrecy over five years later.

It is testimony to the complexity of Grey's character that Hankey, who must have known how Grey was conducting foreign affairs, could later write:

> "Grey's outstanding characteristic was his honesty and straightforwardness..... No one could imagine him doing a mean or dishonorable thing."[3]

Lord Esher, who knew Grey quite well, felt:

> "He is like Castlereagh in his truly British temperament, and his hatred of shabbiness and trickery."[4]

Other ministers were not completely unaware of what was going on.

> "All things that mattered," Lloyd George later wrote, were sent "in private and confidential letters from Diplomatic Representatives abroad to the Foreign Secretary personally."[5]

Why did the Cabinet put up with it? The abuse was only the tip of a larger political issue: the balance of forces inside the Liberal

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1 Grey to Asquith, 21.x.1910, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/100.
2 Monger, G., The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907 (1963), p.254.
3 Hankey, vol.I, pp.184-185.
4 Esher, vol.III, pp.298-299.
5 Lloyd George, vol.I., p.48.

Government, and Grey's membership of the Government.

During the war Grey was still using private correspondence as a means of by-passing the Cabinet. Much of the correspondence concerning the terms of peace is to be found in Grey's Private Papers, or in the Political Series and marked private. It is evident from the circulation lists on this correspondence that it was seen by only a few members of the Cabinet.

Ministers were entitled to see official despatches, and it was the duty of the Foreign Secretary to see to it that these materials were circulated. But even in this matter Grey was not scrupulous, and there were complaints that an insufficient number of documents were being circulated.[1]

The mere circulation of official correspondence did not in itself give ministers a very complete picture of foreign policy. As any diplomatic historian knows, it is extremely difficult to piece together questions of motive and intention from official diplomatic correspondence. Ambassadors were given instructions, not explanations of those instructions: in fact, they were sometimes deliberately "kept in the dark" so that they would not be able to give anything away. As Grey himself recorded his conversations with foreign ambassadors, he could easily omit or tone down anything that was likely to cause offence in the Cabinet. In diplomacy, where so much depends on overtones and shades of meaning, it would have taken a man of much less ingenuity than Grey to use this to his advantage.

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1 Montagu to Grey, 9.iv.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/101.

It is never easy to prove whether somebody deliberately falsified an account of a diplomatic conversation. A great deal depends on one's estimation of the characters involved. It would seem that Grey did make misleading records in order to deceive his colleagues. A good example is the conversations Grey had with the French Foreign Minister in April, 1914. The case in point was whether Britain would aid France, were France attacked by Germany. According to the French account, Grey had said:

> "En ce qui concerne la France aucun Gouvernement anglais, je vous en donne l'assurance, ne lui refuserait son aide militaire et navale si elle était injustment menacée et attaquée. Le Gouvernment qui hésiterait ne pourrait pas résister à la pression de l'opinion publique anglaise."[1]

According to Grey, he had only said:

> "Whether we engaged in a continental war or kept aloof would depend on public opinion in Great Britain when the time came. If there were a really menacing and aggressive attack by Germany upon France, it was possible the public feeling in Great Britain would justify helping France."[2]

Clearly the difference in emphasis, between an assurance that public opinion would force Britain into war and the statement that it might permit the Government to join the war, is of immense importance. The possibility of misunderstanding over language can be ruled out: words are chosen very carefully on such issues; furthermore the French account records Grey as saying, "je vous en donne l'assurance", and this remark could not have been a prefix to the statement he records himself as having

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1 Note du Ministre, 24.iv.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, p.269.
2 Grey to Bertie, 1.v.1914, B.D. X(ii), 541.

made. One of the accounts is false, and it is almost certainly Grey's. Grey had every reason to falsify his statement; it would satisfy the Cabinet. The French had no reason to delude themselves. If they had (for some unknown reason) wanted to make it seem as if Grey had promised to defend France from Germany, then they would have simply written the lie categorically. Moreover, Doumergue's account has the ring of truth about it; he records, for example, that he thanked Grey for his undertaking. Grey's account is uncertain: had he wanted to give the sort of non-committal statement that he said he made, he need have done no more than refer the French to the Grey-Cambon letters that had carefully articulated the extent of British obligations. Why mention public opinion at all?

Unless other Ministers, who were themselves very overworked, took the trouble to hunt down information, or to question Grey, and he could be wonderfully evasive, there was practically no way of checking or controlling policy.

Throughout the Autumn, Winter and Spring of 1914-1915, the Foreign Secretary discouraged discussion of war aims in the Cabinet. He claimed that there was no point in discussing anything because it would only cause trouble between the allies.[1] From the Foreign Office archives it is evident that he knew perfectly well what sort of settlement he desired, and was preparing the way through diplomacy. Grey simply did not want to open up policy to the influence of personalities and principles with which he was in little sympathy.

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1 War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.

When ministers find that they cannot influence policy sufficiently through the normal channels of government, one resort is to try to gate-crash the diplomatic system; Joseph Chamberlain had done just that. Grey kept firm control of the Foreign Office's communications monopoly, and was very efficient in shutting others out. Foreign Ambassadors in London were on such intimate terms with the Foreign Office as to make it impossible for others to make approaches to them. Neither was it easier to go abroad to negotiate. In August, 1914, Churchill, Lloyd George and Masterman, despairing of Grey's Balkan policy, used Noel Buxton and Charles Roden Buxton as their personal emissaries in the Balkans.[1] The Buxtons had no means of communicating back to London except through the Foreign Office cypher. In the Foreign Office, no less than elsewhere, men cannot resist reading other people's correspondence, and the rôle of the Buxtons was uncovered[2] and their influence counteracted.[3]

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1 There is muchiinformation on this intrigue: Grey to Churchill, 26.viii.1914, and mimute by Churchill, 26.viii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C/3/16/3; F.O.371/1901/62507. These sources clearly demonstrate that Churchill was intriguing against Grey, and that the Buxtons worked without the permission of the Foreign Office. The view put forward by Hanak that: "particularly influential (i.e. on the Foreign Office) were the brothers Noel and Charles Roden Buxton", is simply nonsense. The reverse is true. See Hanak's article in Slavonic and Eastern European Review, XLVII.

2 Mimute by Clark, 23.x.1914, Mimute by Nicolson, 23.x.1914, F.O.371/1901/62507.

3 Grey to Bax-Ironside, 19.xi.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/43.

When ministers went abroad in person, it was difficult to conceal their activities from the local diplomatic representative. In February, 1915, Lloyd George tried, without having Grey's prior consent, to put his own ideas to the French Government. Bertie sneaked to Grey:

> "I send you herewith my record of the interview which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had with the President of the Republic on the 3rd. Inst. Mr. Lloyd George made from my record an amended version so as to make it more palatable to some tastes, and will no doubt communicate it to you: but I think you ought to have the correct card of the races so I send it to you."[1]

It was only when Lloyd George was Prime Minister, and was faced with a very weak Foreign Secretary, that he was able, by setting up his own secretariat and opening his own channels of foreign communication, to drastically reduce the authority of the Foreign Office.

Asquith's management of the Cabinet and Grey's own personality helped to minimise differences in the Cabinet. Asquith was a master at steering Cabinet discussions away from controversial issues. Lloyd George later claimed that the Cabinet were nearly forbidden to discuss matters of foreign policy.[2] This is no doubt an exaggeration; but it would seem very likely that Asquith turned debate away from foreign affairs. Some ministers, Churchill and Lloyd George are the best examples, deliberately made remarks in order to provoke their colleagues. Grey was very quiet and unassuming, and never caused offence in this way. This not only protected him over questions of foreign affairs, it gave him a moral standing in the Cabinet. By never joining in the sort of intrigues and

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1 Bertie to Grey, 7.11.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.
2 Lloyd George, vol.I, pp.46-47.

pettiness that always exist in committees, Grey was able to assume a position that was to some extent above criticism.

8. The Foreign Office.

The permanent officials at the Foreign Office helped Grey to keep matters out of the hands of the Cabinet. In the Foreign Office the natural tendency of civil servants to try to run policy was carried to a remarkable degree. They resented any attempt by outsiders to interfere in foreign affairs. When perfectly harmless peace organisations sent in formulas for a League of Nations, the typical reaction was: "Are we to continue to enter this drivel?"[1] Sir Eyre Crowe felt that if outside advice was wanted:

> "The great amateur conference is the British Parliament which has its proper place and functions."[2]

Bertie's description of the Buxtons, made shortly after their near assasination in the Balkans, shows the extent to which malice could be carried against meddlesome outsiders:

> "The brothers Messrs.Buxton have been here," he wrote from Paris, "on their return homeward journey from the Balkan States. Their convictions as expressed by the taller one who was shot in the jaw at Bucharest are not dissented from by the shorter one, who was shot through the lungs ..... "[3]

This extraordinary possessive jealousy was in part the result of professionalism, in part the consequence of the exclusively upper middle class and aristocratic character of the Foreign Office. Diplomats looked

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1 F.O.371/2802/2930.
2 Minute by Crowe, 12.x.1918, F.O.371/4365/425.
3 Bertie to Grey, 7.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.

upon themselves as trusted advisers, there to keep the Government on the right lines, and not as faithful servants of their political masters. Many diplomats believed that they had a right to decide the country's foreign policy.

The Foreign Office particularly resented the influence of the radical-pacifist wing of the Liberal Party. Shortly after the outbreak of war, Hardinge wrote to Nicolson and articulated their common disenchantment with the Liberal Government:

> "I was pleased to see the agreement with France and Russia as to the future conclusion of peace, (that of 5 September, 1914) as I know so well how little a radical government is to be relied on, especially when it contains elements like Haldane and others with German sympathies and peace at any price ideas."[1]

On occasions this antagonism took the form of disloyalty. Nicolson[2] and Bertie[3] would speculate with French and Russian diplomats about how much more reasonable British foreign policy would be if the Conservatives came to power as a result of the 1915 elections. Grey had to reprimand his Permanent Under Secretary because of his excessive friendship with French Ambassador and General Wilson. Nicolson was obliged to write in suitably humble terms to his Chief:

> "Pray do not think either Cambon or any military man has been speaking to me since I last saw you."[4]

However much civil servants disapproved of Grey, they saw his attitudes and policies as being preferable to those of the Cabinet as a

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1 Hardinge to Nicolson, 5(possibly 8)x.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
2 Etter to Sazanow, 22.iv.1914, Int.Bez. (Series 1) II, 263.
3 Memorandum by Bertie, 24.iv.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
4 Nicolson to Grey, 5.viii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/94. Wilson was the bête noire of the Liberals after the Curragh incident.

whole, and they recognised that their influence and authority rested on their ability to work through him. They were nearly always prepared to support the Foreign Secretary and to keep influence out of the hands of the radical wing of the Cabinet.

9. Sir Arthur Nicolson.

There were in the Foreign Office three leading personalities: Sir Arthur Nicolson, Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir William Tyrrell. It has frequently been asserted that Nicolson was Grey's foremost adviser; indeed, that he was the power behind the throne.[1]

Nicolson was certainly in a position of great importance. When Hardinge had been Permanent Under Secretary, he had instituted reforms which had made the Permanent Under Secretary all powerful. The organisation which Hardinge left, and Nicolson inherited, may best be described as being pyramidal. The Foreign Office was divided into departments, at the head of each department was an Assistant Under Secretary, and at the apex of the triangle was the Permanent Under Secretary. Work passed from the most junior member of each department to the most senior, and then went on to the Permanent Under Secretary, before going to the Secretary of State. It was the Permanent Under Secretary who was the link between the Foreign Secretary and his permanent staff. Only the Permanent Under Secretary had right of access to the Secretary of State. A skilful, energetic and tactful man could use such authority to wield immense influence.[2]

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1 May, A.J., The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy (1965) vol.I, p.53; B.D. X(i), p.viii.

2 For the general background, Steiner, Zara, Grey, Hardinge, and the Foreign Office, 1906-1910, H.J.X.3. Historical Journal, X.3.

Sir Arthur Nicolson arrived at the Foreign Office at the end of 1910. He was sixty one years of age, a senior and respected diplomat, with a long and honourable career behind. His great triumphs had been as Britain's plenipotentiary at the Algeciras Conference, and the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Entente. In his mission to St.Petersburg (1906-1910) he had shown himself to be a firm and loyal representative of the powerful anti-German sentiments of the Foreign Office.[1]

Nicolson was also growing old, lazy and arthritic. His natural conservatism and the corrosive effects of poor health and age produced a dangerous inflexibility in his habits of thought. He had no interest in the sort of routine work that filled his days as Permanent Under Secretary. A life spent between the Foreign Office and his house in Chelsea was dull fare for one who had so lately enjoyed such glamour and prestige at St. Petersburg. Like many diplomats and soldiers who pass a large part of their lives abroad, he found it difficult to adjust to the changing values and pace of life at home. Moreover, Nicolson was old enough to remember the time when the post of Permanent Under Secretary had been regarded as being a rather clerkish job. The most forceful reminder of these days was the fact that taking the post involved a fall in salary: a matter not so vulgar that it was below causing him some soul searching.[2] Nicolson always hoped that his appointment would be temporary, and that he would be able to end his career at the Paris Embassy.[3]

Nicolson's appointment was not a success, and between 1910 and 1916 the authority of the Permanent Under Secretaryship steadily diminished.

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1 Harold Nicolson's excellent biography is of immense value, and is absolutely frank on nearly all points.
2 Nicolson, p.319.
3 Nicolson, p.320.

There were three main reasons for this erosion of power: Nicolson was unable to cope with his work; he was locked in personal and political feud with Tyrrell, Grey's Private Secretary, in which Tyrrell used to his influence to undermine Nicolson's authority; Nicolson and Grey disagreed over policy, and this breach later widened into a personal antipathy.

How far Nicolson was failing to fulfil his duties as Permanent Under Secretary is not easy to establish. According to Bertie, the Foreign Office was a complete shambles because Nicolson could not cope with his work. The Permanent Under Secretary being partly a victim of his own indolence, and partly the victim of a system that put too great a burden of responsibility on one man.[1] In January, 1915, he was writing to Tyrrell:

> "I write to you on a matter which ought to concern the Permanent Under Secretary, but as the present holder of that post exercises no sort of authority in the office .... it would be useless to write to Nicolson. He takes no trouble with anything that does not interest him and will sign any lame excuse that a Department writes for him."[2]

Things might not have been quite as bad as Bertie indicates. Bertie was very cantankerous, and was in the habit of making excessive and, in some cases, unfounded accusations. Bertie laboured under delusions of grandeur. His self-esteem was enormous, and he had the revealing habit of writing <u>à la Bismarck</u> when he suggested lines of policy. Though Bertie and Nicolson had known one another since 1870, they did not get on. When Bertie found that Nicolson wanted the Paris Embassy, it was a mortal

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 19.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/163.
2 Bertie to Tyrrell, 16.i.1915, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/189.

blow to his amour propre.[1] Even worse, in June, 1914, Nicolson, anticipating his early appointment to the Paris Embassy, had rather tactlessly approached Bertie about buying his furniture.[2] This was too much for the Ambassador, and during the Sarajevo crisis his main concern seems to have been to frustrate Nicolson's attempt to have his job.[3] Bertie later formed a very similar dislike for Lord Esher. He came to believe that Esher, who was used as a very grand liaison officer between London and the French Army, was trying to usurp his authority as Ambassador. He would refer to Esher as "the Dog at the Fair" (which, when one considers Esher's appearance, is a nice description).

None-the-less, it is evident that Nicolson had no enthusiasm for his work.[4] Faced with a vast amount of paper work and excessive administrative duties, he was unable to exert real influence in any direction. His minutes give the impression that he was working in great haste on matters that had ceased to interest him.

Tyrrell and Nicolson enjoyed a peculiarly unsatisfactory relationship. In June, 1915, Hardinge wrote to Nicolson:

> "I know he (Tyrrell) has not been very nice to you since you have been at the Foreign Office."[5]

This was not an untypical piece of Foreign Office understatement. Harold Nicolson, always a conspicuously kind commentator, also alluded to the

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1 Lee to Bertie, 14.iv.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
2 Nicolson to Bertie, 28.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
3 Bertie to Tyrrell, 30.vi.1914, (copy) Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188; Memorandum by Bertie, 25.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188; Memorandum by Bertie, 30.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
4 H. Nicolson, pp.334-335.
5 Hardinge to Nicolson, 21.v.1915, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/378.

feud between Tyrrell and his father.

> "There arose in the Foreign Office (and almost imperceptibly) two schools of thought; the one represented by Sir Edward Grey and Sir William Tyrrell; the other by Nicolson and Crowe .... loyalty, confidence, collaboration were, as between Grey, Crowe and Nicolson, continuously maintained."[1]

Tyrrell's name is noticeable in its absence.

The reason for the mbittered relations between Tyrrell and Nicolson lay in basic disagreements over policy.[2] These disagreements were aggravated by a personality clash. Tyrrell's influence with Grey in itself undermined Nicolson's authority. Tyrrell went further, he tried to get Nicolson out of the Foreign Office, and endeavoured to prevent him having the Paris Embassy.[3]

Grey found his Permanent Under Secretary to be an awkward subordinate. Nicolson was really only interested in two things: the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian alliance; leaving the Foreign Office and taking up an ambassadorial post. Nicolson's persistence in advocating the former soured Grey's attitude towards him,[4] and he slowly warmed to the second of Nicolson's desires. Shortly before the outbreak of war, it was tacitly agreed that Nicolson should have the Paris Embassy.[5] By that time Grey stopped taking Nicolson into his confidence, and Nicolson lacked either the will or the good sense to try to ingratiate himself with a political master who was taking little notice of him.[6]

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1 H.Nicolson, p.329.
2 Chapter II.
3 Memorandum by Bertie, 30.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
4 Vansittart, Lord, The Mist Procession (1958), p.120.
5 See Cambon despatches during the early part of the Sarajevo crisis. D.D.F. (3rd Series) X. Also on very important issues Nicolson set down his ideas in minutes and was evidently not seeing much of Grey.

The coming of war obliged Grey to keep Bertie at Paris and Nicolson at the Foreign Office.[1] But the relations between the Secretary of State and the Permanent Under Secretary never really improved. When, in 1916, Hardinge again became Permanent Under Secretary, the French Ambassador noted the difference between his influence and Nicolson's:

> "Il est rare qu'en arrivant au Cabinet d'Hardinge, je ne le trouve vide parce qu'il est au 1er étage. Il n'en était pas de même avec Nicolson, qui passait quelque fois plus d'une journée sans voir Grey."[2]

Grey and Nicolson acknowledged the limited basis of their understanding:

> "You (Nicolson) do not seem to know," Grey noted, "that in Germany I am said to be stupid and a mere tool of that arch-devil Nicolson. And the German, who said this, has been in England and has met me, which makes it the more striking."[3]

One is tempted to add, as the examiners say, Discuss?

The Permanent Under Secretary was tired and unwell, he disliked the atmosphere of war-time diplomacy and the debasing of the standards to which he was accustomed. He lost any inclination to determine events,[4] and his war aims emerged as markedly different from Grey's.[5]

10. Sir Eyre Crowe.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, Bertie had recorded that Grey wished:

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1 Lee to Bertie, 21.xi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166; Memorandum by Bertie, 19.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/163.

2 P.Cambon to J.Cambon, 1.vii.1916, Cambon, P., Correspondence (1946), vol.III, p.116.

3 Grey Minute, undated, on bottom of the first page of Spring-Rice to Nicolson, 27.xi.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/376.

4 H.Nicolson, pp.427-428.

5 I cannot share Harold Nicolson's view of his father's war aims; the question is considered in Chapter III.

> "to get rid of Nicolson from the Foreign Office as he stands in the way of something better - viz. Crowe!"[1]

Crowe had risen steadily into the upper echelons of the Foreign Office: in 1906, he had been made Senior Clerk, and in 1912, Assistant Under Secretary. His forceful (and some thought too forceful) personality, his high intelligence, and his immense capacity for hard work, established his position as the most likely successor to Nicolson.

The retention of Nicolson as Permanent Under Secretary did not immediately halt Crowe's rise to power. On 7 August, 1914, Crowe presented Nicolson with a long and well-argued memorandum.[2] He suggested that the war forced the need for reorganization in the Foreign Office. The centre-piece of his proposals was the creation of a War Department, which was to deal with all political questions directly concerning the war, and the affairs previously dealt with by the Eastern and Western European Departments. Crowe suggested he himself be put in charge, and that he should have the right of direct access to Grey.[3] Crowe's proposal was wise and timely: Nicolson agreed to Crowe's suggestions, and the reforms were immediately instituted.[4] As head of the War Department, which was by far the most important department within the Office, Crowe assumed a position technically not far inferior to Nicolson's own.

Crowe's significance within the Foreign Office hierarchy is a

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 25.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
2 Memorandum by Crowe, 7.viii.1914; F.O.366/40089.
3 Crowe's phrase is: "All correspondence respecting the war, should continue to be submitted through me, so as to preserve unity of direction." This may either have meant submitted to Nicolson, or that Crowe already had direct access to Grey, probably the latter.
4 Minute by Nicolson, 7.vii.1914, on bottom of Memorandum by Crowe, 7.vii.1914, F.O.366/40089.

deceptive guide to his influence. Crowe rose to power in spite of, and not because of, his relations with Grey. The Foreign Secretary never liked Crowe and they did not get on. Harold Nicolson has given us the reasons for the strained relations between Grey and Crowe.

> "Sir Eyre Crowe's magnificent qualities of brain and soul were sometimes marred by an excess of rigidity .... he .... had the unfortunate habit of indicating to the Foreign Secretary, and his colleagues in the Cabinet, that they were not only ill-informed but also weak and silly."[1]

Contemporary records very much confirm this picture of Crowe. Anderson, an envoy of the King of Denmark, complained that:

> "Sir E. Crowe had treated him with great abruptness and had assumed a dictatorial attitude towards him. Mr. Anderson stated Sir E. Crowe had evidently lost control of himself, and that he had felt compelled to get up and leave the room after a short period."[2]

Crowe might have flourished under a different Chief, but with Grey such habits were fatal. Grey was far too sensitive a man to tolerate direct criticism, however well-founded it might have been.

Grey went against Crowe's advice on nearly every major point of policy in 1914 - German policy before Sarajevo, the July crisis, the declaration of war against Austria-Hungary, bringing Japan into the war, and Turkish policy between August and November, 1914. It may well have been this that drove Crowe to write minutes that were intensely insulting in tone. At about the end of October, 1914, matters came to a head: according to Burtie:

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1 H. Nicolson, pp.327-328.
2 Drummond to Grey, 25.v.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/45.

> "Crowe has completely lost his head. His Prussian blood came out and he was insubordinate and insolent to Grey who has decided that his appointment to succeed Nicolson is impossible. He has no judgement, tact or sense of proportion. His ability is undoubted."[1]

Crowe was moved from the War Department into the Commercial Department (Contraband Department).[2]

11. Sir William Tyrrell.

Sir William Tyrrell was the most influential of the Foreign Office civil servants. All those who had personal knowledge of the Foreign Office knew of Tyrrell's pre-eminence. To repeat Sir Francis Oppenheimer's unforgivable pun, Tyrrell was the "Grey Eminence" of the Foreign Office.[3]

Tyrrell was much more than Grey's foremost adviser, he was a close personal friend. Sir Valentine Chirol, who was well acquainted with the situation at the Foreign Office, wrote (in 1913):

> "his (Tyrrell's) influence with Sir E. Grey is growing greater and greater - perhaps too great."[4]

One diplomat, writing in the Spring of 1914, recorded the gossip at the Foreign Office:

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 19.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/163.
2 The former Commercial Department came to be known as the Contraband Department, and later evolved into the Ministry of Blockade.
3 Oppenheimer, p.206. This pun has a pedigree: Kühlmann, the Counsellor at the German Embassy, referred to Tyrrell as the "Graue Eminenz" of the Foreign Office.
4 Chirol to Hardinge, 2.vi.1913, Hardinge Papers, vol.93.

> "I was at the Foreign Office on Saturday but saw only Crowe and some Juniors. Nicolson and Tyrrell were both away, I am told the latter is high in favour and is everything to Grey."[1]

In his memoirs Grey paid tribute to Tyrrell:

> "I had occasion, in office, to know the great value of Tyrrell's public service; but the thing I prize most is our friendship, that began in the Foreign Office, and continued uninterrupted and intimate after office ties ceased."[2]

Tyrrell was also a great friend of the Asquiths and, unlike Grey, would spend weekends with them in the country.[3] He was excellent and amusing company. Even the rather severe sounding Miss Gertrude Bell concluded her letters to him in positively racy style:

> "Bless you, my dear Willie, good fortune and good health be with you. Don't overwork and remember that I am your love."[4]

Tyrrell had risen to prominence through the Private Secretary's Department. If the Foreign Office could be likened to a school, the Private Secretary's Department was the alpha stream - perhaps "Pop" would be a more fitting analogy. First as Grey's précis writer, and later as his Private Secretary, Tyrrell had made himself indispensable to Grey. He advised him on policy, helped him with the Press and Parliament, and smoothed over innumerable small difficulties.[5]

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1 Lee to Bertie, 14.iv.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
2 Grey, vol.I, p.xviii.
3 Margot Asquith to Balfour, 16.vi.1915, Balfour Papers, add.49794.
4 Gertrude Bell to Tyrrell, 7.xii.1913, Grey Papers, F.O.800/104. It should be noted that at this time endearments did not carry the same overtones as they do to-day.
5 H.Nicolson, pp.327-328.

Though a public servant, Tyrrell had the style of a politician; he worked through personalities rather than through normal channels. With a revealing inexactitude, the American Ambassador reported:

> "Sir William Tyrrell, the secretary of Sir Edward Grey - himself, I think, an M.P."[1]

All those who recorded their impressions of Tyrrell described him as being a brilliant man. Lichnovsky wrote of "dieser hoch intelligenter Mann"[2], and Hardinge of "a very clever young man".[3] Tyrrell's intellect was of an intuitive and speculative nature. It was typical of the mentality of the Foreign Office to put this down to a strain of oriental blood in his ancestry.[4] Educated in Germany, and perhaps more significantly under Jowett at Balliol, Tyrrell had a knowledge of foreign countries, and qualities of self-confidence that Grey himself lacked.

Grey's reliance on Tyrrell was to a degree a choice of the heart; Grey was attracted by opposites. His closest friend in the Cabinet was Haldane; his most intimate adviser in the Foreign Office was Tyrrell: both men possessed attributes that Grey did not; they were worldly, urbane, cultivated, clever and talkative. Grey was quite different; he was taciturn, simple in his tastes, and usually pedantic in his reasoning.

Tyrrell's influence on the course of British foreign relations is immensely difficult to chart. Tyrrell wrote very few minutes, and conducted his

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1 Page to House, 26.x.1913. Henrick, B.J., Life and Letters of Walter H.Page (1924), vol.I, p.201.

2 Prince Lichnovsky, Meine Londoner Mission (1918), p.26.

3 Hardinge to Nicolson, 21.vi.1915, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/378. Hardinge was, as usual, being excessively pompous: Tyrrell was nearly fifty years of age when he wrote this letter.

4 Aston-Gwatkin, F., Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-1950 (1957), pp.894-5.

business almost entirely by word of mouth. Which of Grey's ideas came out of his own head, and which out of Tyrrell's, is impossible to demonstrate. For years the two men saw one another daily, and their intimacy was so great that hardly a line passed between them. It would seem, from that fragmentary evidence that does exist, that between 1912 and 1915, Tyrrell was a most formidable influence on the course of British foreign policy; indeed, he may well have been its chief architect.

There is one further difficulty in estimating Tyrrell's rôle. In the early Spring of 1915 Tyrrell suffered a "nervous breakdown",. In late March or early April, 1915, Drummond replaced Tyrrell as Grey's Private Secretary. How quickly Tyrrell was "going downhill" before then is problematical.[1] It would appear that he remained Grey's foremost adviser right up to the early Spring of 1915, for as late as February of that year Grey had entrusted him with important talks with Colonal House.[2] The Foreign Secretary, as his sight grew worse, relied more and more on Tyrrell.[3]

In the later part of the war, Tyrrell worked himself back into favour, and in 1925, he succeeded Crowe as Permanent Under Secretary. His diplomatic career ended, somewhat more happily than Nicolson's, at the Paris Embassy.

12. Other Foreign Office Personalities.

The eclipse of Nicolson and Crowe gave opportunities to younger men

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1 In the letter from Gertrude Bell, already quoted, Tyrrell was being advised to ease up, and this was in 1913.

2 Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol.I, p.374.

3 In some cases this can be traced, e.g. certain correspondence, previously dealt with by Grey, is handled by Tyrrell. For Tyrrell's fall from favour see Chirol to Hardinge, 3.v.1915, Hardinge Papers, vol.93, and Hardinge to Nicolson, 21.v.1915, Carnock Papers,F.O.800/378.

to guide policy. George Russell Clerk, a senior clerk, rose to a position of some authority. At the beginning of the war, Clerk was put in the War Department,[1] and when Crowe left, he was its leading personality. Like many of the more junior members of the Foreign Office, Clerk seems to have looked upon Crowe as the model of everything a civil servant should be. Clerk's mimutes were very like Crowe's; they were full, lucid and precise. Clerk possessed one quality that Crowe lacked: tact. He was particularly influential on matters concerning the Near and Middle East.

Sir Eric Drummond was Asquith's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs; his job was as to link Downing Street and the Foreign Office. He succeeded Tyrrell as Grey's Private Secretary. Drummond was a close friend of Tyrrell's, and he later endeavoured to bring Tyrrell back into the Foreign Office hierarchy.[2] He was also popular with Asquith and the Asquith family.[3] However, like Tyrrell, Drummond was never obliged to put down much on paper, so it is very difficult to judge the extent of his influence.

13. <u>The Foreign Office and Other Departments of State</u>.

Contacts between the Foreign Office and other departments of State existed on two levels: consultation between Cabinet Ministers; correspondence between the Departments.

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1 Memorandum by Crowe, 7.viii.1914, F.O.366/40089.
2 Minute by Drummond, 6.iv.1916, on the back of Bryce to Grey, 6.iv.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/105.
3 Margot Asquith to Balfour, 7.vii.1917, Balfour Papers, add.49794; Margot Asquith to Balfour, 11.vii.1917, Balfour Papers, add.49794.

As between Grey and other Ministers, the Foreign Secretary made little attempt to organise a common policy. Grey did not enjoy very cordial relations with Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary. Harcourt's unstable personality often manifested itself in rather unpleasant behaviour. A contemporary complained that:

> "He lives a very luxurious snobbish and rather vulgar and ostentatious private life. His love of intriguing and wire pulling is pronounced."[1]

It was the latter that annoyed Grey. Harcourt had been entrusted with negotiations with the German Embassy over Portuguese Colonies, and instead of following the agreed course, he used the opportunity to further his own German policy. In consequence Grey let the Anglo-German Agreement over Portuguese Colonies fall through. Neither Harcourt nor Grey were too pleased with the action of the other.[2] During the Sarajevo crisis Harcourt had tried to organise mass resignations from the Cabinet, and this further embittered their relations.[3] In the Autumn of 1914 a squabble between the Foreign Office and Colonial Office,[4] which should have been settled at ministerial level, was allowed to drag on between civil servants for two months. Had Harcourt and Grey enjoyed any cordiality in their relationship, this dispute could have been settled in half an hour.

Similarly, Grey found Churchill overbearing, and resented his attempts to interfere in foreign policy. When the Foreign Office uncovered the

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1 Character Skethh of Harcourt; 1912, by A.Ponsonby, in the possession of Lord Ponsonby.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 19.11.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188. The King was also annoyed, and spoke of "that damned fellow Harcourt", Memorandum by Bertie, 20.11.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.

3 Professor Temperley's record of an interview with Grey, Spender Papers, add.56386.

4 Chapter VI.

Buxton's exploits, Grey wrote a rather embarrassed minute:

> "No notice should be taken of this; I do not understand it; I will deal with it with Mr.Churchill."[1]

Churchill was one of the few members of Cabinet who seems to have troubled to read Foreign Office telegrams, and was continually suggesting points of policy. At the bottom of one of Churchill's minutes, Grey wrote in exasperation:

> "I have said that the Cabinet will be consulted."[2]

Grey got on much better with Kitchener and Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India. This did not mean that they had any appreciable effect on his views, or that there was any attempt made to have a common war aims policy. Indeed Grey was the fiercest critic of their plans to expand the British Empire at the expense of Turkey.[3]

There would appear to have been very few informal contacts at a lower level, and certainly not on questions of long-term planning, like war aims. One can trace the relations between the Foreign Office and other Departments so easily and completely through correspondence, that it is obvious that very little was being discussed on a personal basis.

Some correspondence was exchanged between the Foreign Office and Colonial Office about war aims, but there was no attempt made to establish special institutions for discussing such matters. There was nothing

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.23.x.1914, F.O.371/1901/62507.
2 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 28.11.1915, and minute by Churchill, 28.11.1915, and minute by Grey, undated, c.28.11.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88.
3 Chapter 5.

like the endless series of war aims committees which were established in the second half of the war.[1] In consequence, there was no co-ordinated or common inter-departmental policy.

14. War Aims and the Executive, August, 1914 - March, 1915.

In the early part of the First World War, a small number of men in the Cabinet and the Foreign Office were deciding the ends for which Britain was waging war. The nature of decision-making process for war aims was a continuation of the pre-war system for deciding questions of foreign policy. The established structure for managing Britain's foreign relations had been modified in two respects: the Foreign Secretary had more authority vis a vis the Cabinet than precedent allowed; within the Foreign Office, informal channels of influence had been superimposed on its strictly hierarchical organisation.

In other respects also the pattern of authority and influence was a continuation of the pre-war situation. Up to the Spring of 1915, the deliberations of the executive were unruffled by the clamour of public opinion or disturbed by the excitement of new ideas; neither had military necessities yet began to dictate the course of Britain's foreign relations. It is to these questions that we must now turn.

15. Public Opinion and War Aims.

In the years before 1914 public opinion had existed as an influence on foreign policy only in the inanimate way that military and financial strength does. It suggested limits within which it would be wise to

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1 The exception was the inter-departmental committee on desiderata in Turkey in Asia, CAB.27/1.

confine policy, but was not a fountain of ideas and sentiments to which those who executed policy looked for inspiration and guidance. On crucial issues - Anglo-French military conversations, and Anglo-Russian naval talks - the public at large was often ignorant, or deliberately misled.

The initial impact of the war was to make the executive even more independent of external influences. Before the war, dissenting opinion had been able to exert some influence through the "establishment" - Members of Parliament, the quality press, the Church, Clubland, and so on. The outbreak of war witnessed unparalleled demonstrations of national unity: official foreign policy became synonymous with the national interest. The Foreign Office was not slow to perceive that this wave of uncritical popular support could be used to assert its independence from "establishment" pressure groups. At the same time, the executive did not feel to be constrained, either by its own conscience, or by the weight of popular demand, to enter into a dialogue with popular opinion.

16. <u>The Press</u>.

Radical newspapers - the Manchester Guardian and the Daily News - had been amongst the severest critics of Grey's foreign policy. They held that it was excessively anti-German, that it involved the nation in dangerous European squabbles, and that it was leading to an enormous and wasteful expenditure on armaments. With the coming of war the criticism of the radical press became very muted. C.P.Scott, the Editor

of the Manchester Guardian,[1] and Cadbury,[2] who had a large stake in the Daily News, were most reluctant to incur the wrath of public opinion by attacking the Government. Scott, in particular, was a conspicious source of disappointment for those who looked to him to uphold the radical tradition in foreign policy.

The executive had two organs which could be relied upon to print what they wanted: the Westminster Gazette and the weekly journal, the Spectator.

On the Continent, the Westminster Gazette was regarded as the organ of the Liberal Party.[3] It was widely believed that its editorials were officially inspired. The charge that the Westminster Gazette was an official journal was, of course, false. On the other hand, J.A.Spender's later claim, that as Editor of that paper he always printed just what his conscience demanded,[4] is even further from the truth.

Spender was a friend of Asquith and Grey. In the twenties, he helped Grey, when Grey was writing his memoirs;[5] later, he was co-author of Asquith's semi-official biography. Yet Spender remains an oddity among the friendships of the second half of Asquith's career. The journalist had none of the qualities Asquith seemed to admire: he had neither wealth, nor social position, nor even a fund of innocent chatter;

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1 Scott to Morel, 24.ix.1914, Scott to Morel, 25.ix.1914, Morel Papers, Box.F.6.; Scott Correspondence with Arthur Evans, Scott Papers, add.50908.

2 Cadbury to Morel, 3.x.1914, Box F.8.; Morel Papers; Cadbury to Harrison, 20.ix.1917, Morel Papers, Box F.6.

3 Albertini, vol.II, pp.208-209.

4 Spender, J.A., The Public Life (1925), p.131.

5 There is some correspondence on this in the Spender Papers, add. 46389; Grey, vol.I, p.xix.

Spender was a poor and priggish Liberal. The friendship of Spender and Grey is more plausible: Grey chose his friends for their qualities as sympathisers rather than for any capacity to amuse. He certainly found a sympathetic ear in Spender. Spender's papers have been heavily weeded; but from the little that remains it is still evident that Spender was allowing the Westminster Gazette to be used as a mouthpiece for Grey's ideas. Grey and Asquith both flattered Spender, primed him on policy, and told him what line his paper should take.[1] Spender frequently visited the Foreign Office, and reported gossip to Grey and Tyrrell.[2]

Grey and Asquith were not entirely dependent on Spender's goodwill. In 1908, the Westminster Gazette had run into financial trouble. The Liberal Party had stepped in, and through an intermediary, Lord Allendale, had purchased a considerable number of shares in the Westminster Gazette. Though the point never had to be put crudely (Spender, like Grey and Asquith, was a Balliol man) Spender was the employee of the Liberal Party.[3]

The Spectator also followed the official line. St.Loe Strachey, the Editor, often met with Tyrrell and Grey, and he did all he could to please them.[4] When, after some editorial misdemeanour, the Press Bureau

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1 See Spender Papers, add.46388 and 46389.
2 Spender to Grey, 17.11.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/111; Memorandum by Spender, August, 1914, Spender Papers, add.46392.
3 Asquith Papers, M.S.148.
4 See correspondence between Foreign Office and the Spectator, Strachey Papers. This author saw these papers when they were in possession of the Spectator. They were then in boxes marked 1914, 1915 and so on. Recently they have been moved to the Beaverbrook Library.

complained to the Spectator, the Editor was mortified:

> "In questions like this," he protested, "my duty is to do what those who are responsible want me to."[1]

During the Constantinople negotiations of March, 1915, Strachey was used by the Foreign Office to allay Russian suspicions about British policy.[2] Strachey carried his loyalty to the point where it was damaging his own interests. In October, 1916, he wrote a curious, unsolicited letter to Grey, in which he pointed out the great services he had rendered to the nation.

> "I heard only recently of two Englishmen giving up reading the Spectator 'because they could not bear to see the boots of the American Government blacked every week by Strachey.' This ought to be a testimonial to the thoroughness with which I have carried out the wishes expressed to me by the Foreign Office and through Robert Cecil."[3]

The relations between the Times and the Foreign Office were of some complexity. Between 1905 and about 1912 or 1913, the Times and the Foreign Office had been on the most cordial terms. Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, who had been Grey's Parliamentary Under Secretary, took the editorials of the Times to be indicative of official policy.[4] Arthur Ponsonby, who had himself been a diplomat and Private Secretary to Campbell Bannerman, observed that:

> "The Foreign Office confides in no one but the Times."[5]

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1 Strachey to Buckmaster, 15.ix.1914, (copy), Strachey Papers.
2 Strachey to Benckendorff, 12.iii.1915, (copy), Strachey Papers.
3 Strachey to Grey, 3.x.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/110. There is also a copy in the Strachey Papers.
4 Fitzmaurice to Morgan, 31.vii.1914, Spender Papers, add.46392.
5 Ponsonby to Lloyd George, September, 1912, (copy), Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

Several of the journalists from the Times were on intimate terms with the permanent officials at the Foreign Office. Colonel A Court Repington, the Military Correspondent, had had a central role in organizing Anglo-French military talks at the end of 1905.[1] Sir Valentine Chirol, the Foreign Editor until 1912, had been a diplomat, and was held in high esteem by Hardinge[2] and Nicolson,[3] and was on "particularly friendly terms" with Tyrrell.[4] The Foreign Office frequently played host to Henry Wickham Steed, of the Foreign Desk of the Times. In the Spring of 1914, Steed was sent by Grey and Tyrrell to Paris as, in the modern jargon, a public relations man for the State Visit of King George V.[5]

After about 1912, the relations between the Foreign Office and the Times began to turn a little sour. The reasons for this are not entirely clear; it may have had something to do with the influence of Northcliffe. The more likely reason is that the relations between the executive and journalists are always liable to sudden change. Those who give information become very irritated if journalists fail to give them a favourable press; journalists tend to resent attempts to dictate what they write. Once the situation arises where mutual trust is lost, then relations can become very acrimonious in a surprisingly short period of

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1 Monger, pp.236-256.
2 See Chirol's correspondence with Hardinge in the Hardinge Papers.
3 See Chirol's correspondence with Nicolson in the Carnock Papers.
4 Crewe to Grey, 14.v.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.
5 Memorandum by Bertie, 8.iii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/176.

time. There were one or two incidents that embittered relations between the Foreign Office and the Times. Tyrrell strongly objected to the Times editorials during the Sarajevo crisis.[1] Nicolson and Grey were furious with the Times when, in November, 1914, it attacked Sir Louis Mallet for his handling of diplomacy at the Porte. It was forbidden that Wickham Steed be allowed to set foot inside the Foreign Office building.[2] In retaliation, Steed refused to co-operate when Foreign Office officials asked him to be less pro-Slav and more pro-Italian in what he wrote.[3] Such tactics merely irritated the Foreign Office still further, and minimised the influence of the Times.

While the Northcliffe Press was immensely powerful, its tactics were so crude that its attempts to influence the Government had a perverse effect. Northcliffe's megalomania and his near perfection of tactlessness conspired to rob him of any influence on the conduct of Britain's foreign relations. Margot Asquith's description of Northcliffe as being, "a brute .... vain, swollen-headed and vile,"[4] would have won a round of applause in the Cabinet and a standing ovation in the Foreign Office.[5]

Except for occasional fits of pique over articles in the Times, the executive had very little trouble with the Press on questions of foreign affairs. Most editors were anxious not to embarrass the Government.

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1 See Chapter II.
2 History of the Times (1952), volume 4, part I, p.234. Seton-Watson, R.W., Masaryk in England (1943), p.61. Who banned Wickham Steed is not absolutely clear, but it was probably Nicolson, see H.Nicolson, p.428.
3 F.O.371/2376/51340.
4 Margot Asquith to Lord Cromer, 19.vi.1915, Cromer Papers, F.O.633/24.
5 Northcliffe to Rodd, 18.v.1915; Rodd to Drummond, 2.vi.1915; Minutes by Drummond and Crewe, 7.vi.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/65.

The Government suffered considerably less criticism on matters of foreign policy than it had had to endure before the war, and the traditional source of opposition, the radical press, was conspicuously silent.

17. Radical-Pacifists.

In the early part of the First World War the pacifist movement was very weak. This eclipse in its influence helped to free the executive from all external pressure groups. When, in the later part of the war, the pacifist movement gained popular support, the Government was obliged to look to the political "right" for backing. The stronger became the pacifist movement, the more the Government lost its independence to extreme elements: indeed, the overall effect of pacifist movement was to make official policy more extreme than it would have been if no pacifist movement had existed. The weakness of the movement in the first year of the war is therefore important to an understanding of the extreme independence of the executive in that period.

In the years around 1914, the term pacifist embraced a wide spectrum of opinion. Nowadays pacifism is synonymous with non-violence; then it meant a disinclination to use violence, and the pursuit of policies that would make war, if not impossible, then at least less likely.

The movement had disparate intellectual roots. It was to all intents and purposes an ideological rubbish dump: here and there one finds interesting pieces among the debris, but the overall impression is one of confusion. The main strand of belief was inherited from Cobden and Bright: the optimistic conviction that the universalising of

the common interest in the production and distribution of wealth would bring a golden era of peace and understanding between men and nations. This belief had become mixed with other notions. The strangest of its bedfellows was the teaching of J. A. Hobson and his apostle, H. N. Brailsford.[1] According to their doctrines, it was the very men who manipulated trade and finance who were the shadowy figures behind international enmity and strife. Economic interpretations of international dispute were hopelessly intertwined with older radical ideas.[2]

Added to this there was the New Pacifism of Norman Angell. Angell's ideas cannot be understood outside the context in which they were stated. The crux of his doctrine consisted of a series of criticisms of the social Darwinist ideas of the time. He tried to demonstrate that war was not inevitable, and that if it came it would lead to financial and economic ruin.

These varied and contradictory ideas came together in a common acceptance of a conspiracy theory of foreign policy. The Government was not representing the true interests of the people, it was being moved by mysterious sectional interests. Whether the conspiracy was aristocratic, in Bright's sense, or plutocratic, in Hobson's, was never quite clear. The unity of the movement lay not in common ideas and consistent principles, but in common and consistent opposition to official policy.

Before the war the radical-pacifists gained wide popular support.

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1 Brailsford, H.N., The War of Steel and Gold (1914).
2 This author cannot share the view put forward by Mr.A.J.P.Taylor (and others) that in men like E.D.Morel nineteenth century radical traditions remained pure - see the Chapter on E.D.Morel in Mr.Taylor's The TroubleMakers (1956) and Dr. Wulliger's unpublished Ph.D. - The Idea of Economic Imperialism: with special reference to the life and work of E.D.Morel (London University, 1953.)

Grey faced very serious criticism from radical back-benchers in his own Party. They found fault both with the principles upon which Grey's policy rested - or, at least, those principles upon which they believed it rested - and with the wisdom of removing foreign policy from the democratic influence of legislature. It was argued that Grey's policies were not merely mistakon, but that they were the inevitable outgrowth of a corruptness in the institutions which managed foreign policy.[1] Convinced that Grey had no time for them, radical back-benchers began to organise themselves politically.

In 1912, seventy or eighty M.P.'s from the radical wing of Liberal Party and the I.L.P. formed the Liberal Foreign Affairs group. The leaders of the group were Noel Buxton, Arthur Ponsonby, Philip Morrell and Ramsey Macdonald. It was conceived as a protest against an "obscurantist doctrine of diplomacy"; in the short-run a watch committee on Grey's foreign policy; in the long run an embryo for a type of Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.[2] The group was not without significance. In the winter of 1913-1914 it brought a good deal of pressure to bear on the Government over naval estimates.[3] During the Sarajevo crisis radical back-benchers threatened open party revolt if the Cabinet opted for war.[4] Their opposition caused Grey and Asquith[5] much anxiety. Nicolson, aware

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1 Ponsonby, A., Democracy and the Control of Foreign Policy (1912).
2 Memorandum by A. Ponsonby, undated, c. Spring, 1912, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
3 Harvey and Molteno to Ponsonby, 19.xii.1913, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
4 Notes by A.Ponsonby on meeting with Grey, 29.xii.1914; Ponsonby to Grey, 29.xii.1914, (copy); Ponsonby to Asquith, 30.vii.1914, (copy), Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
5 Asquith, vol.II, pp.9 & 20. (All references to Asquith are, unless otherwise stated, to Memories and Reflections.)

of the seriousness with which Grey regarded the Parliamentary opposition to war, wrote:

> "I am sure that the country (I am not thinking of City financiers or back-bench M.P.'s) is sound."[1]

There were similarly impressive demonstrations in favour of neutrality in the country.

Once Britain was at war the whole pacifist movement collapsed. This sudden eclipse has been noted by historians,[2] but it has not been properly explained.

Radicals, many of whom had experienced the tribulations of opposition during the Boer War, expected public opinion to be carried away on a wave of patriotic fervour. The knowledge that their own position was weak made them reluctant to attack the Government's foreign policy. The result was that a very widespread disillusionment with official policy, and even opposition to the war itself, went unvoiced and unheard. This dissatisfaction only assumed political dimensions when the pacifist movement re-grouped and reorganised as the war went on.

It is interesting to study the confusion of the radical-pacifists through the person of C.P.Scott. Scott, as the Editor of Manchester Guardian, had real power to influence the public, and his dilemma was typical of all the anti-war group.

No sooner had war broken out than a number of radical and I.L.P.

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1 Nicolson to Grey, 1.viii.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375. In his final draft - published in B.D. XI - Nicolson did not include the passage quoted.

2 Hanak, H., The Union of Democratic Control during the First World War, B.I.H.R.-36. Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 36

M.P.'s were grouping, "united for common action on war questions".[1] The hard core of this group, together with E.D.Morel and Norman Angell, were to form the Union of Democratic Control. Throughout August, 1914, Scott was in close touch with this group, and early in September, he met with Morel, Ramsey Macdonald, Phillip Morell and C.P.Trevelyan to discuss the policy which the U.D.C. should adopt.[2] Morel had prepared a harsh indictment of the Government's foreign policy, and he wanted to come out openly against the war. Scott, supported by Ramsey Macdonald, insisted that no direct attack of this type could be made. In deference to Scott's opinion the U.D.C. line was toned down. The U.D.C. was diverted from its original purpose of opposing the war; it became a propaganda organisation devoted to criticising the purposes for which war was being fought.[3] Morel always considered this change in direction was an error.

> "We made a huge mistake," he wrote in 1915, "in not challenging the whole policy right away and from the very beginning making ourselves perfectly clear on that point."[4]

About a week after the U.D.C. had settled its tactics, the Morning Post, the Daily Express and the Spectator accused the group of clandestine pro-German propaganda. Morel[5] and C.P.Trevelyan[6] sensed that they were

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1 C.P.Trevelyan to Morel, 5.viii.1914, Morel Papers, Box F.6.
2 Memorandum by Scott, 3-4.ix.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
3 Memorandum by Scott, 3-4.ix.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
4 Morel to Ponsonby, 5.viii.1915, (copy), Morel Papers, Box F.6.
5 Morel to Scott, 11.ix.1914, Scott Papers, add.50908.
6 C.P.Trevelyan to Scott, 13.ix.1914, Scott Papers, add.50908.

dangerously isolated from public opinion, and they appealed to Scott for open support if matters grew worse. At this point Scott took fright and opted right out of the movement. He explained to Morel that:

> "I think it would be a fatal error to attempt to deal with anything controversial at present ..... I agree with your objects but I am apt to part company with you as to methods - so I am better off out of it."[1][2]

Such reticence was the rule rather than the exception on the radical wing of the Liberal Party and the I.L.P.

A secondary weakness in the pacifist movement was an intellectual crisis. There was an obvious contradiction between the enormity of the tragedy and the banality of the remedies put forward. Even supporters of the U.D.C., like Ramsay Macdonald, had no confidence that democratic control of foreign policy would significantly improve the conduct of international affairs.[3] This intellectual crisis helped to bring many Liberal intellectuals down on the side of Grey rather than his critics.[4]

The weakness and confusion of the pacifist movement in the country was matched by a disintegration of its position in Parliament.

The permanent officials at the Foreign Office hated the Radical-pacifists. At the very best they looked upon them as silly idealists and well-intentioned cranks, and at the worst as traitors. Lowes Dickenson, the author of International Anarchy, and by no means an

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1 Scott to Morel, 25.ix.1914, Morel Papers, Box F.6.
2 Scott to Morel, 24.ix.1914, Morel Papers, Box F.6.
3 Macdonald to Morel, 24.viii.1914, Morel Papers, Box F.8.
4 Gilbert Murray to Ponsonby, 6.i.1915, Arthur Ponsonby Papers; Bryce to Ponsonby, 1.v.1915, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

unintelligent observer of the international system, was summarily dismissed as "an academic radical detached from the realities of life."[1] Throughout the war the Foreign Office pursued a campaign against E.D.Morel,[2] a vendetta which passed all bounds of good taste and reason, and which must stand as one of the nastiest and least creditable episodes in the history of that department. From very early on in the war the civil servants at the Foreign Office were prepared to believe reports that pacifists were creatures of international socialism, controlled by the military hierarchy at Berlin.[3] The notable exception to this view was Tyrrell,[4] who enjoyed much closer contacts with the leading pacifists than his colleagues.[5] Grey's attitude was not quite as extreme as that of his civil servants, and not quite as tolerant as that of his Private Secretary. He looked upon criticism as being directed against him personally, and saw the radicals as being not merely unreasonable but not open to reason.[6]

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1 F.O.395/452/216071.
2 F.O.395/55/205362; F.O.395/140/33236; F.O.395/140/66039; F.O.395/140/168672; The attitude of the Home Office, Military Intelligence and the Special Branch of Scotland Yard was worse. They conducted themselves with all the vindictiveness and pettiness of a secret police force in a totalitarian state - see Foreign Office files quoted and also H.O.45/263275/10741/88; H.O.45/263275/10741/99; H.O.45/10801/307402.
3 Victor Fisher to Grey, 18.xi.1914, and Minute by Clerk, 21.xi.1914, and Minute by Nicolson, 23.xi.1914, F.O.371/2176/73175; also F.O.371/2176/77288.
4 Minute by Tyrrell, undated, c.23.xi.1914, F.O.371/2176/73175.
5 Tyrrell to Ponsonby, 10.i.1913, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
6 Minute by Grey, undated, c.16.iv.1915, F.O.371/2505/44511.

The Foreign Office was very quick to see that mass enthusiasm for the war could be used to free itself from its critics in the Commons. Radical M.P.s, who had never found it easy to make much impression upon the Foreign Secretary, were in the unenviable position of being branded as pro-German if they dared to rebuke the Government. The Foreign Office knew it could rely on the patriotic spirit of the House of Commons to intimidate pacifist criticism, and played on the goodwill of Members in getting awkward questions removed.[1] When an embarrassing question did remain tabled, the Foreign Office were either for ignoring it, or humiliating the M.P. who had asked it. In November, 1914, King, a radical back-bencher, tabled a question which touched on the thorny topic of Russian encroachment into Persia. The advice Grey received on how to answer the questions reveals the contempt which his civil servants had for radical back-benchers, and also their extreme confidence that they could use popular support to ignore the Parliamentary criticism.

> "I imagine," wrote Clerk, "that Mr.King does not really wish to embarrass H(is) M(ajesty's) G(overnment) at this juncture, but whether he does so wish or not, I think his and similar mischievous activities should be checked without remorse. I would not invite any opportunities for attacking Russia in Parliament. If Mr.King tries to press the point he might be snubbed."[2]

Grey could never bring himself to be quite as rude as his advisers wished, but he used the strength of his position to avoid debate. It

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1 e.g. F.O.371/2448/49189; Beck to Ponsonby, 25.viii.1916, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

2 Minute by Clerk, 24.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/76008.

was well over a year after the outbreak of war before there was any real Parliamentary discussion on foreign policy and war aims. In Parliament, as in the country, Grey's bitterest critics were silenced.

18. Economic Interests.

The influence of economic interests and pressure groups has been a source of fascination both for Marxist historians and for their critics. On the wider question of whether ideas are determined by economics, I will not presume to speculate; such matters are of a philosophical nature. The narrower issue of the influence of economic factors may be divided into two smaller questions: the influence of private industrial, financial and trading interests; the Government's concern with the economic interests of the nation.

The influence of private economic interests was of minimal importance. The rather dubious instance of an approach made by the Pacific Phosphates Co. to the Colonial Office, for the right to work minerals on the captured German Pacific islands of Anguar and Nauru, seems to have been the only case where private business interests directly approached a Department of State on a matter relating to war aims.[1] While it is possible that more was done privately, or on a local level in the colonies, the line of reasoning adopted in official documents points to the fact that such approaches were never of any importance.

The Government was, of course, concerned with Britain's economic interests. But in the early part of the war there was no attempt made

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1 C.O.616/10/34302; C.O.616/10/35182; C.O.616/10/3658.

to use the war as an instrument for economic retribution against Germany. There were, however, piecemeal attempts made to improve Britain's economic and trading position.

19. Nationalities.

The sway of pressure groups pleading national causes was not large. The Foreign Office usually received emigrés gentlemen with courtesy, and Masaryk[1] and Supilo,[2] the Croat representatives, were respected. But the civil servants at the Foreign Office had a professional aversion to dealing with unofficial groups and private individuals.[3] What was more they tended to look upon the nationalists from Eastern and Central Europe as comic opera figures. The trouble was that these men usually attached themselves to some well-meaning member of the English upper classes, and felt that this gave them a licence to pester the Foreign Office at will. Particularly unfortunate in this respect were the Poles. Unable to express themselves coherently in English, they took to writing memoranda of interminable length in French. To make matters worse they shunned the typewriter and copied out their communications in a most difficult handwriting. When these memoranda were handed in personally, it would seem that they found their way almost immediately to the wastepaper basket. Those that were registered hardly ever have an attached minute. Not that the Foreign Office was above deriving some light amusement from them.

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1 F.O.371/1900/67456.
2 Memorandum Respecting the South Slavs, CAB.37/123/46.
3 Minute by Crowe, 31.viii.1914, F.O.371/2095/46074; Minute by Nicolson, 1.ix.1914, F.O.371/2095/46074.

> "It is characteristic of Polish politics,", wrote Oliphant, "that the several self-styled representatives of Polish feeling here have all produced different schemes as to the future of Poland. In this connection I heard yesterday that M.Filipowicz, who has been in correspondence with the F.O., has gone off his head and has had to be placed in an asylum."[1]

The Czechs and the South Slavs had an able spokesman in R.W.Seton-Watson, who was on friendly terms with several of the permanent officials at the Foreign Office - Clark, Lord Eustace Percy, and the two Nicolsons. While these men were sympathetic towards the plight of the subject peoples of Eastern and Central Europe, they did not believe that national self-determination was the main issue of the war.[2]

Of all the groups representing the interests of aspiring nations, the Zionists were probably the best organised, and had most voices in the Cabinet. Lloyd George was enthusiastic about the prospect of Jewish national homeland. Herbert Samuel pleaded the case in the Cabinet and with Grey.[3]

20. Conclusion.

In the early months of the Great War those who managed Britain's foreign relations had more freedom than at any time before. They were able to use overwhelming popular support for the war to assert their

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1 Minute by Oliphant, 12.xi.1914, F.O.371/1900/69905.

2 See Chapter IV.

3 There is little to add to Stein, L., The Balfour Declaration (1962). There is some information in Memorandum by Scott, 27.xi.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901; Samuel to Lloyd George, 13.i.1915, Lloyd George Papers, C/7/96; The Future of Palestine by Samuel, January 1915, CAB.37/123/4; Samuel to Grey, 22.i.1915, Samuel to Grey, 17.ii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/100.

independence from dissenting pressure groups. At the same time, the temporary eclipse of opposition groups on the political left freed the executive from the influence of its most vociferous critics.

The great authority of the executive rested on a simple and extreme polarisation of popular opinion: a massive and uncritical support for the war at one pole; a very stunted anti-war group at the other.

Authority within the executive was held by a small group surrounding Sir Edward Grey. Thus responsibility for war aims was concentrated in the hands of a few men in the Foreign Office and the Cabinet.

The process whereby the traditional centres of authority began to lose their freedom of action was at once dynamic and subtle: many factors interacted with an alarming and fascinating mobility, which language, however carefully chosen, can never quite imitate. Four main developments occurred. Firstly, military deadlock weakened the position of the political arm of Britain's foreign relations. The ends of foreign policy were increasingly determined by military needs.[1] Secondly, the demands of war obliged the executive to seek greater sacrifices from the civilian population. This weakened the position of the executive vis à vis public opinion, and made it far more sensitive to popular sentiment. Thirdly, growing disillusionment with the war swelled the ranks of the several and various anti-war groups, and this made the Government increasingly reliant on nationalists who whole-heartedly supported the war.[2] Fourthly, there

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1 The Secret Treaty of London was solely the child of military necessity see, F.O.371/2507, and F.O.371/2508.

2 This author made a study of this development, using Cabinet Office, Foreign Office and Home Office files. He regrets that lack of space forbids him making any detailed examination of the question, and begs the reader's indulgence for not making further elaboration on the point. The general trend may be noted in Memorandum by Percy, 2.vi1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.

arose a moral and psychological commitment to see the war through. This made it virtually impossible to consider a peace in which the allies were not completely victorious.[1]

These new influences were sufficiently pronounced as to constitute a break in the continuity in Britain's foreign relations. While there are similarities between war aims before and after the Spring of 1915 - and in this dissertation, I attempt to indicate them - to continue the story past this date, it would be necessary to re-draw the parameters which shaped the development of British attitudes towards the peace settlement.

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1 Both Grey and Lloyd George felt this - see Grey to Mallet, 24.11.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.300/109; Memorandum on a conversation with Lloyd George, 27.vi.1918, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

CHAPTER II

PRUSSIAN MILITARISM

1. Introduction

During the First World War the destruction of Prussian militarism figured prominently in public statements of British war aims. Both the Prime Minister[1] and the Foreign Secretary[2] emphasised that it was to realize this high ideal that the war against Germany was being waged. Yet few, if any, historians have bothered to inquire what was meant when Grey and Asquith avowed the nation's resolve "to rid Europe of the military caste of Prussia."

When Grey and his colleagues in the Cabinet spoke of destroying Prussian militarism, their minds turned back to the events of the early summer of 1914. They believed that the military advisers of the German Government had been responsible for the war; that this group had gained control of German policy, and had forced upon Germany's neighbours the grim alternatives of humiliation or war. Destroying Prussian militarism was a matter of punishing the disturbers of the peace - the German military caste - and of discrediting their sinister ideals - militarism. Only if this happened would the tranquillity of Europe be restored, and the British Empire safeguarded for future generations.

If we are to understand the policy of the British Government, we

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1 Speech by Asquith at Dublin, 25.ix.1914, (1914).
2 Speech by Grey at Bachstein Hall, 22.iii.1915, (1915).

must see how it viewed the role of its German counterpart in the events leading up to war: we must, therefore, go back to the Sarajevo crisis and before.

While much has been written on the origins of the First World War, this author believes that Grey's policy has been almost universally misinterpreted, and that given our existing analyses of it, one cannot understand British attitudes towards German war guilt. The first part of this chapter tries to show that in the period between the Balkan Wars and the World War Grey felt that he had come to an understanding with the German Government about European problems, and that he could rely on Bethmann Hollweg, Jagow and the Kaiser to keep the peace and hold Germany's restless allies in check. This new policy, based on the experience of Anglo-German co-operation during the Balkan Wars, involved working with Germany. It was a departure that was the source of much controversy in the Foreign Office, and was marked by the Foreign Secretary's growing reliance on Sir William Tyrrell, and his mounting irritation with Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson. The latter held that this new course was fraught with danger, and that Germany remained as aggressive and as untrustworthy as ever. But Grey drew a distinction between the German civilians, on the one hand, and aggressive, militarist pressure groups, on the other. This conviction had a powerful influence on British policy during the Sarajevo crisis. Grey believed that the best hope for peace lay in conciliating Germany, in order to strengthen the position of the German civilians against pernicious militarist elements. Grey has been widely accused of a lackadaisical handling of the July crisis: but, in fact he was well aware of the dangers of the situation, and deliberately pursued a moderate line in the hope that

this would secure the ascendency of peaceful councils at Berlin. The failure of his policy convinced the Foreign Secretary and the Cabinet that the German military had taken charge of their nation's destiny, and had wilfully plunged Europe into war.

The second part of this chapter shows how Grey and his colleagues intended to destroy the Prussian military party, and the importance of this end in British war aims.

2. Grey's Policy to I9I2

In his early years at the Foreign Office, Grey was much influenced by the anti-German group of diplomats which had secured the key positions at the Foreign Office and the most important embassies.[I] He subscribed to a theory of German aggressiveness, and his policies reflected the beliefs and prejudices of Hardinge, Crowe, Mallet, Tyrrell, Nicolson, Bertie, Spicer and Cartwright.[2] Britain, her power at once declining and challenged by Germany's bid for predominance in Europe and expansion overseas, could only maintain her imperial position and check German ascendency by ranging herself alongside the Franco-Russian alliance. These new-found friendships with France and Russia relieved Britain of some of the global burdens of isolation, and ensured that the Dual Alliance was sufficiently strong that it did not fall beneath the sway of Imperial Germany. Such were the parameters of British foreign policy

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I. Steiner, Zara, Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office, I906-I9I0, H.J.X.3.
2. Monger, pp.99-I03, 299-300, 3I3-3I7.

until 1912: after that date Grey parted company with his Germanophobe advisers, and sought friendship with Germany.

3. The Liberal Party and Foreign Policy

There were four main réasons for this new departure in Grey's policy: political pressure from within the Liberal Party; the influence of Haldane and Tyrrell; Grey's growing tendency to ignore the advice of the anti-German group in the Foreign Office; Grey's own conviation that Germany had abandoned her aggressive designs.

Many Liberàls looked with shame and anguish upon the ever mounting cost of armaments, and with horror upon international tensions that had on several occasions brought the nation close to war. There was in the Cabinet a strong undercurrent of discontent with the seemingly endless spiral of Anglo-German antagonisms. Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, was positively pro-German;[1] Morley preferred Germany to Russia;[2] Lloyd George, for once predictable in the rôle of the parsimonious Chancellor of the Exchequer, wanted to pare down naval estimates;[3] Haldane favoured keeping open channels to moderate elements at Berlin.[4] Other ministers, even though they tolerated Grey's policy, hoped for a better understanding with Germany. On the Liberal backbenches, radical-pacifists

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1 D.N.B., 1922-30, (1937), pp.390-391: Memorandum by Bertie, 30.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/174: Harcourt to Grey, 8.i.1914; Harcourt to Grey, 9.i.1914; Harcourt to Grey, 6.iv.1914; Grey Papers, F.O.800/91.

2 Morley of Blackburn, Viscount, Memorandum on Resignation, (1928), pp.&67: Professor H.Temperley's record of an interview with Grey, Spender Papers, add.56386: Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 29-30.v.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.

3 Jenkins, pp.332-335.

4 Strachey to Haldane, 16.vi.1916, (copy), Strachey Papers.

were fast losing patience with a foreign policy which, they felt, emanated from professional diplomats who could think only in terms of crude mechanics of international power.[1]

Opinion inside the Party was not in itself decisive; Grey had successfully resisted radical criticism for half a decade, and as one disgruntled M.P. wrote to him:

> "But I am afraid yourregard the views of radical backbenchers as merely mischievous so I will spare you any more."[2]

It did, however, constitute a body of opinion that obliged Grey to look for ways of improving Anglo-German relations.

4. Haldane and Tyrrell.

Of greater significance was the influence of Haldane and Tyrrell: Grey was much more liable to listen to advice from close personal friends than to yield to direct political pressure.

Haldane had always held that there were moderate and extreme elements at Berlin, and that Grey could strengthen the position of the more liberal sections of German opinion by cultivating amicable relations with Germany Har.) Hardinge, who disliked Haldane and his pro-German sentiments, felt he was capable of leading Grey astray:

> "Edward Grey..... is quite ready to listen to German blandishments influenced as he is by Haldane in his views."[3]

But if Grey was being influenced by Haldane, he was being much more

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1 Character sketch of Grey by A. Ponsonby, 1912, Arthur Ponsonby Papers: Memorandum on Liberal Foreign Affairs Group, by A. Ponsonby, undated, c. Spring 1912, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
2 Ponsonby to Grey, 15.xii.1911, Grey Papers, F.O.800/111.
3 Hardinge to Chirol, 30.iv.1913, (copy) Hardinge Papers, vol.93.

influenced by Hardinge's own protegé, Tyrrell.[1] Tyrrell was the moving spirit behind the Anglo-German détente of 1912-1914. Why Tyrrell broke with the anti-German group in the Foreign Office is not absolutely clear, though some points do emerge. The influence of personal ambition cannot be ruled out: Tyrrell liked to shape events, and it may well have been that it was only by turning against the anti-German group that he could assert his own ascendency. On another level, Tyrrell was intellectually more flexible than most of his colleagues in the Foreign Office, and he was sympathetic to Grey's very difficult position as a member of a Liberal Government.[2]

Tyrrell challenged a theory that had been gaining ground in the Foreign Office for almost a decade: the theory that Germany was more aggressive, more powerful and more dangerous than other States. He believed that German restlessness had been contained and she accepted the fact: Imperial Germany had arrived at maturity. Britain could therefore negotiate with Germany without jeopardizing her own security. Moreover, such a course of action would strengthen Britain's bargaining position against France and Russia. Sir Valentine Chirol, who (as we have seen) was a close friend of Tyrrell's, wrote to Hardinge:

> "I confess I am a little alarmed at the extraordinary change which his (Tyrrell's) views seem to have undergone in the course of the last six months..... .....the course which William Tyrrell welcomes must, he (Nicolson) is convinced, bring us once more, and is now already bringing us, into the orbit of Germany policy."[3]

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1 Hardinge of Penshurst, Viscount, Old Diplomacy, (1947), p.12.
2 H. Nicolson, p.329.
3 Chirol to Hardinge, 18.iii.1913, Hardinge Papers, vol.93. See Chapter V for Tyrrell's attitude towards Russia.

Educated in Germany,[1] and equipped with a fine intuitive intelligence,[2] Tyrrell was receptive to German fears and enjoyed cordial relations with German diplomats.[3] In numerous semi-official and informal conversations with the German Embassy, Tyrrell brought Anglo-German relations to a level of some intimacy.

Our diplomatic histories of the pre-1914 era have either not mentioned Tyrrell's dealings with the German Embassy; or they have held that they never in fact existed, and that the evidence which says that they did is unreliable. The reasons for this neglect seem to lie, though the point is never made explicitly, in the feeling that it would be very difficult to explain the origins of the war if the Anglo-German understanding was more than a series of limited negotiations on colonial issues. This author would contend that unless it is realised that Tyrrell (and Grey) believed that they had come to a tacit understanding with the German Government about European problems, neither Grey's policy during the July crisis, nor the subsequent pattern of British war aims is explicable. The conviction that militarist groups within the German Government had brought about the war, was grounded on the assumption that the German civilian Government was to be trusted. We must therefore examine the question of Tyrrell's contacts with German Embassy.

The debate opened with publication of the German Foreign Office archives. It was revealed that in 1912 Tyrrell had approached Richard von Kühlmann, the Counsellor at the German Embassy, and suggested an Anglo-German Entente. According to Kühlmann, Tyrrell was speaking for Grey, but they were running against the majority opinion in the

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1 G.Gwatkin-Ashton, F., D.N.B., 1941-1950 (1959) p.894.
2 H. Nicolson, pp.327-329.
3 Von Kühlmann, R., Erinnerungen (1948), pp.339-341, 343, 373; Lichnovsky, p.29.

Foreign Office, and the matter should therefore not be made known to the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Arthur Nicolson.[1] In his biography of his father, Harold Nicolson dwelt at some length upon this interview, and though he did not provide an adequate explanation of it, he did not doubt the authenticity of Kühlmann's story.[2] Nicolson's view is well worth emphasising because he had first-hand knowledge of the Foreign Office in this period. In 1948 Kühlmann's memoirs were published. Kühlmann's story was that Tyrrell ran Grey, Tyrrell wanted an Anglo-German understanding, and he and Tyrrell worked together towards this end.[3] In spite of its many errors in detail, Kühlmann's story might well have been taken as useful evidence had it not been for a savage criticism by the late Sir Lewis Namier. Namier's Avenues of History contains a long essay on Kühlmann, entitled Story of a German Diplomat.[4] Namier's theme is simple: Kühlmann was a compulsive liar; his dates are wrong, his facts improbable, his understandings of the workings of the British Government imperfect, and his views of the rôle of an English civil servant little short of ridiculous. Namier succeeded in discrediting Kühlmann: Ashton-Gwatkin, in the Dictionary of National Biography, cites Namier's analysis as a conclusive refutation of Kühlmann;[5] more recently, Dr. Zara Steiner invoked Namier's judgement and discounted Kühlmann's evidence.[6]

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1 Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg, 15.x.1912, G.P.33, 12884; Kuhlmann to Auswärtige Amt, 16.x.1912, G.P.33, 12885.
2 H. Nicolson, pp.384 - 386.
3 Kuhlmann, pp.313, 337-341, 343, 373.
4 Namier, Lewis, Avenues of History (1952), pp.74-91.
5 Ashton-Gwatkin, p.895.
6 Steiner, Zara, Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office, 1906-1910, H.H.X, 3.

Without wishing to detract from the reputation of a very great historian, I would take issue with Namier's view. Sir Lewis' attack was not a dispassionate historical analysis. He made no bones about the fact that he despised Kühlmann; he saw him as a German Conservative parading as a man of reason and moderation. Equally he made it clear that he was defending Tyrrell from what he considered to be unjust charges. He had known Tyrrell during the First World War, when Tyrrell had been his Chief in the Political Intelligence of the Foreign Office, and felt it his duty to defend his good name. But when Namier's argument is closely examined, it becomes very suspect. His claim to have privileged knowledge of the situation is not quite true. Namier did not know Tyrrell before the war, and he had only an imperfect knowledge of the Foreign Office and foreign policy in that period. What is more, his contacts with Tyrrell were at a time when Tyrrell was at the nadir of his influence, only shortly after personal failings had all but wrecked his career. Namier's argument that no English civil servant would have acted in the way that Kühlmann alleges is alsodubious. Kühlmann described the relationship between Grey and his Private Secretary thus:

> "I feel that Grey was not a strong man ... he was to a great extent dependent on his advisers and colleagues, especially Sir William Tyrrell."[1]

In 1912 Arthur Ponsonby, who was a friend of Tyrrell and a relative of Grey, considered:

> "He (Grey) trusts the opinion of his permanent officials more than his own judgement."[2]

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1 Kuhlmann, p.313.
2 Character Sketch of Grey, 1912, by A.Ponsonby, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.

Hardinge, who had worked with Grey for five years, wrote:

> "I know well the influence he (Tyrrell) enjoys with Edward Grey."[1]

The late Lord Hankey, in many ways the ideal authority, later remembered that Tyrrell acted in a manner quite out of keeping with that expected of a permanent official at the Foreign Office.[2] Namier himself said that Tyrrell imagined himself as a diplomatist in the style of Talleyrand.

Kühlmann's story is inaccurate on points of detail, but in outline it is correct and it is confirmed by contemporary evidence.[3]

Grey came to take Tyrrell's advice on German policy. Writing in April, 1914, one diplomat, reporting the gossip at the Foreign Office, wrote:

"Tyrrell is everything to Grey. Both are now very Germanophile."[4] Tyrrell's dealings with the German Embassy had Grey's approval. Tyrrell owed his favour to Grey's patronage, and he could not have gone behind Grey's back. The first time the German Ambassador or Kühlmann called at the Foreign Office, Tyrrell would have been found out. Both Lichnovsky and Kühlmann were certain that Tyrrell spoke for Grey, and they would not simply have taken Grey's word for this; they must have confirmed Tyrrell's statements through their own conversations with Grey.[5]

Tyrrell intentionally operated at a secondary level, because Grey was not willing to work through official channels. In part, Grey wanted

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1 Hardinge to Chirol, 30.iv.1913, (copy) Hardinge Papers, vol.93.
2 Hankey, vol.I, p.364.
3 Namier and Dr.Steiner both claim that there is no evidence to support Kühlmann's story. This is not the case.
4 Austin Lee to Bertie, 14.iv.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
5 Lichnovsky, p.29.

to explore possibilities; in part, Grey was reluctant to give offence at Paris and St. Petersburg should news leak. Tyrrell, who "possessed a remarkable instinct for avoiding diplomatic difficulties,"[1] was a useful and loyal courier. In early July, 1914, Colonel House reported:

> "Tyrrell brought me word to-day that Sir Edward Grey would like me to convey to the Kaiser the impression I have obtained from my several conversations with this Government, in regard to the better understanding between the nations of Europe, and to try to get a reply before I leave. Sir Edward, he said, did not wish to send anything official or in writing, for fear of offending French and Russian sensibilities in the event it should become known."[2]

Perhaps the most significant insight into Tyrrell's influence with Grey, and the way in which Tyrrell was using unofficial channels of communication to Berlin, is that in the Spring of 1914 a secret meeting was arranged between Tyrrell and Jagow. Though this meeting never came to fruition, it had Grey's approval,[3] and its purpose may well have been to solidify the Anglo-German detente. The preparations for this meeting were a closely guarded secret and were probably unknown to the rest of the permanent officials at the Foreign Office. During the July crisis it was Tyrrell, and not Nicolson, who was entrusted with the delicate negotiations with the German Embassy.[4]

5. The Demise of the Anti-Group.

Tyrrell's influence was matched by Grey's growing dislike of the anti-German group in the Foreign Office. Hardinge had a strong

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1 H. Nicolson, p.327.
2 Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol.I, pp.249-250.
3 The Memoirs of Count Bernstorff, translated by Sutton, E., (1936), p.137.
4 Especially, Lichnovsky to Auswartige Amt., tel., 29.vii.1914, D.D.355.

personality, and had been able to impress his views on Grey. With the departure of Hardinge, the spell which the anti-German group had had over Grey was broken. Nicolson, shy and retiring, never succeeded in establishing the same degree of cordiality in his relations with Grey as had his predecessor.[1] The Foreign Secretary was reluctant to listen to Crowe. By 1914 doctrinaire anti-German sentiments had ceased to guide Britain's foreign policy. Crowe complained to Bertie:

> "Grey had allowed Harcourt to negotiate with the German Embassy and had taken no heed of the Foreign Office warnings in regard to Germany."[2]

6. Grey and the Anglo-German détente.

In the year or so between the Balkan Wars and the World War, Grey became certain that Germany had abandoned her envious challenge to British power, add had put aside her aggressive ambitions. German co-operation during the London Ambassadors' Conferences; the appointment of the Anglophile Prince Lichnovsky as ambassador at London; the seemingly pacific attitude of Jagow, Bethmann Hollweg and the Kaiser:[3] these developments convinced the Foreign Secretary of Germany's goodwill, and of her desire to see peace in Europe and an end to the years of embittered relations between Germany and England.

The ramifications of the Anglo-German détente - the Bagdad Railway negotiations, and the negotiations over Portuguese Colonies - fall outside the scope of a study of war aims. One totally neglected

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1 Chapter I.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 17.ii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188. The negotiations were those over Portuguese Colonies.
3 F.O.371/1987/4361: Nicolson to de Bunsen, 25.v.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374.

aspect of the détente is of immense importance: Grey came to believe that Germany was a restraining influence in the Triple Alliance, and that she would use her authority to hold Austria and Italy in check. This was especially important after 1912, when the most likely sources of international dispute were in the Balkans. Like the United States and the Soviet Union in our own time, the Foreign Secretary felt that Britain and Germany had recognised their mutual interest in seeing that they were not dragged into conflicts by their friends. In the Spring of 1913, Chirol recorded:

> "He (Tyrrell) is convinced however, that we are relieved, at least for a long time to come, from the German menace."[1]

This conviction was shared by Grey, who in May, 1914, instructed Buchanan:

> "It seemed to me, that in essential matters of policy which are really important, Germany sometimes restrained Austtia and Italy, particularly the former, and allowed them only to go to a certain point."

The Ambassador was left in no doubt as to the significance which Grey attached to this view, and was told it was "worth bearing in mind in future developments."[2]

On 24 June, 1914, the German Ambassador informed Grey that he had been instructed by Bethmann Hollweg:

> "to tell me (Grey) that he hoped, if new developments or emergencies arose in the Balkans, that they would be discussed as frankly between Germany and ourselves as the difficulties that arose during the last Balkan crisis, and that we shall be able to keep in as close touch."[3]

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1 Chirol to Hardinge, 18.iii.1913, Hardinge Papers, vol.93.
2 Grey to Buchanan, 7.v.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/74.
3 Grey to Goschen, 24.vi.1914, B.D. XI, 4.

It would seem that Lichnovsky made up this story to further Anglo-German understanding. His own record of the conversation is ominously vague on the issue of who raised the question of co-operation in the Balkans. He reported to Berlin, "it seemed to us," and then mentioned the substance of the conversation.[1]

Grey was "taken in" by Lichnovsky; and not least because he had said what he wanted to hear. The next day, the Foreign Secretary saw Bertie. Bertie's memorandum on their conversation is of singular interest: it is an extensive record of Grey's views on the very eve of the Sarajevo crisis.

Bertie was told:

> "We are on good terms with Germany and we desire to avoid a revival of friction with her..... the German Government are in a peaceful mood and they are very anxious to be on good terms with England."

Grey went on to allude optimistically to his conversation with Lichnovsky, and informed Bertie, as he had informed Buchanan a month earlier, that he would continue

> "intimate conversations with France and to lesser degree with Russia so far as might be expedient so as to be a connecting link between Germany and the Triple Entente and a check on the hastiness of Austria and Italy."[2]

Grey thought that he had brought Anglo-German understanding to a point where Germany could be relied upon to prevent Austria from causing serious trouble. This was the central assumption of his policy during

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1 "In view of the possibility that a new war in the Balkans might break out and that Russia might then decide to conduct a somewhat more active foreign policy, it seemed to us to be of the greatest importance that the intimate contact which existed between us during the last crisis should be maintained in face of all occurences, in order that we might successfully encounter any warlike policy on the basis of common understanding." Lichnovsky to Bethmann Hollweg, 24.vi.1914, D.D.5.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.

the Sarajevo crisis. When, in August 1914, the British Government looked back on the events of the previous month, the crucial question was why German policy had deviated from its pacific course. This was why such great emphasis was placed on the German military - as opposed to the civilian Government - it was the military who were held to have been responsible for Germany's dramatic and sinister volte face.

In October, 1914, Grey wrote:

> "We had, I thought, during the Balkan crisis of a year ago or so, made some progress towards getting the European groups of Powers together. We got on very well with Germany at this time, because the Prussian military party did not think the time for war had come and left the civil element alone."[1]

7. Russia and Germany.

There were two views in the Foreign Office about the Anglo-German détente. Grey and Tyrrell believed that Jagow, Bethmann Hollweg, the Kaiser and Lichnovsky geminely wanted friendship with Britain and peace in Europe. They held that the outstanding signs of aggressiveness in Germany did not mean duplicity on the part of the German Government, rather they indicated that there were contending factions at Berlin. Crowe and Nicolson considered that Germany remained as aggressive and dangerous as ever, but that the German civilians were feigning friendship to drive a wedge between Britain and her allies. These two contending views existed right up to August, 1914, and were carried over into the debate on war aims. Grey later held that the aggressive groups had gained

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1 Grey to Roosevelt, 20.x.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/110. Published in Grey, vol.II, p.141.

the upper hand; Nicolson felt that Germany had been consistently aggressive, and Grey had just misunderstood the situation.

It was the German reaction to the re-emergence of Russian power that provided the prism through which the Foreign Office viewed Berlin. In February, 1914, the German press launched bitter anti-Russian campaigns, and whipped up public feeling against the increases in the size of the Russian army. Crowe analysed these campaigns at some length, and tried to show Grey that Jagow was not to be trusted. Crowe's argument was that German policy was dominated by an aggressive mentality. This spiritual malaise flowed from two sources: Prussian militarism and lust for territorial expansion; bourgeois desire for global power and prestige. These sentiments were institutionalised in the bureaucratic and military structure of the German Empire; they were represented by powerful pressure groups - the Navy League and the Pan-Germans: they were instincts ingrained into the subconscious of every German.[1] He felt that to believe that the German civilians were peaceful was to misunderstand the whole character of the German Government. Signs of friendship were like the temporary disappearance of sores on body contaminated with syphilis. He advised Grey that Jagow was deliberately working up anti-Russian feeling in Germany, and was hoping thereby to screw concessions out of England that would rupture Anglo-Russian relations.[2] But Crowe realised that Grey was taking no notice of his advice: his minutes took on the tone of impatience and rudeness:

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1 Memorandum by Crowe, 1.1.1907, B.D.III, pp.397-420.

2 F.O.371/1987/7300.

> "It is really absurd for Herr von Jagow to think that anybody will believe his disclaimer of responsibility for the press campaign. The way the campaign was conducted is to anyone familiar with the classic work of Mr.Busch conclusive evidence of the authorship of the F.O. press-bureau, which works under Herr von Jagow's orders."[1]

As it was common knowledge in the Foreign Office that Grey trusted Jagow, this minute was a very insolent jibe at the Foreign Secretary.

Sir George Buchanan, the Ambassador at St. Petersburg, also warned that Germany was trying to drive a wedge between Britain and Russia. He concluded from the anti-Russian press campaigns that the German Government was trying to create tensions as a prelude to dividing the Entente:

> "Unless..... Germany is prepared to make still further financial sacrifices for military purposes the days of her hegemony in Europe will be numbered; as even without the co-operation of England, Russia and France combined will be strong enough to confront the united forces of the Triple Alliance. There are, however, still three critical years to pass before that result is achieved. In the race for armaments Russia has more staying powers than Germany; and as Germany is aware of the fact, there is always the danger that she may be tempted to precipitate a conflict before Russia is prepared to meet it. During these critical years, therefore, Russia will stand in need of our support; and, should we fail to give it when she appeals for it England will not be numbered amongst her friends."[2]

Buchanan's despatch was carefully noted in the Foreign Office and was widely circulated.[3] But as we have seen, Grey rejected Buchanan's advice, and sent him a private note of explanation. He pointed out that he trusted Germany, and that she could be relied on to keep the

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1 Minute by Crowe, 17.iii.1914, F.O.371/2092/11537; also minutes by Crowe, F.O.371/2092/11538 and 11628.
2 Buchanan to Grey, 18.iii.1914, B.D. X(ii), 528.
3 The Minutes are not reprinted in British Documents; F.O.371/1988/12716.

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> for one Power to make to another and it comes oddly from a Power who quite rightly makes secret arrangements with her allies - arrangements which for aught we know may comprise certain measures against us in possible eventualities. We must not forget that only a year or two ago Germany pressed Russia to engage to remain neutral in the event of hostilities between Germany and England - as she strove also to secure our neutrality in case of a Franco-German conflict..... I sincerely trust we shall not walk into this trap but keep our hands perfectly free and our friendships unimpaired."[1]

The Foreign Secretary refused to put any sinister construction on German policy. He believed Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow were honest men like himself, and he trusted them.[2] He felt that the German reaction was a natural one; the German civilians were merely being pushed by public opinion, and were expressing genuine apprehension. His main concern was to repair as quickly as possible the damage to Anglo-German relations.

> "The (Berliner) Tageblatt," he noted, "shows a serious leakage in Paris. The article should not be mentioned to Prince Lichnovsky."[3]

It was symptomatic of the times that he was much more angry with Iswolsky and Poincaré, whom he suspected of having leaked news of the talks, than he was annoyed with Germany for protesting about them.[4] Early in June, he made a statement to the Commons denying any binding British obligations to go to war.[5] A statement which, he hoped, would sooth his radical critics and quieten German anxieties. Grey saw the situation at Berlin as one of aggressive groups putting pressure on a well-intentioned

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 7.vii.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
2 Memorandum by Spender, August 1914, Spender Papers, add.46392.
3 Minute by Grey, undated, on the back of Goschen to Nicolson, 23.v.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374; also minute by Grey, undated, c.7.vii.1914, on Minute by Nicolson, 7.vii.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.
5 Grey, vol.I, pp.288-290; F.O.371/2092/26663.

civilian Government. This impression was confirmed by the German Ambassador. On 16 June, Bethmann Hollweg informed Lichnovskytthat if the rumours of Anglo-Russian naval convention were true, it would have a profoundly disturbing influence. The German Chancellor explained at length that the news of Anglo-Russian naval talks had upset opinion in Germany, and that in consequence the Pan Germans and the militariats were encouraging him to embark on a policy of adventure.[1] Lichnovsky brought the matter to Grey's attention. The Foreign Secretary noted German fears and told Bertie:

> "Bethmann Hollweg says that the Pan Germanists will make use of reports of such an agreement to agitate for additionsto the German fleet, which is regrettable just as relations between Germany and England have so improved."[2]

In this statement, made three days before the Sarajevo murders, we can observe the seeds of the subsequent theory of the war guilt of particular cliques within the German Government. There is moderate civilian Government being pushed by military and quasi-military elements.

Late in June Lichnovsky returned to Germany for a short holiday. While he was away, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was murdered. In the course of his stay Lichnovsky saw both the Kaiser and Bethmann Hollweg. He "picked up" sufficient information to know that very serious consequences were likely to follow from the assasinations at Sarajevo.[3]

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1 Bethmann Hollweg to Lichnovsky, 16.vi.1914, D.D.3.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.
3 Lichnovsky, pp.31-32.

peace.[1]

The disagreement over German policy went one step further as a result of Anglo-Russian naval talks. In April, 1914, Grey reluctantly agreed to Anglo-Russian naval talks. The talks themselves were of little importance, and they had hardly got under way when the war began.[2] What was of much greater significance was that news of the talks was leaked, and provoked an enormous outcry in the German press. The Germans, already alarmed by a dramatic increase in Russian power, felt the ring of encirclement tightening around them.[3]

Throughout late May, June and early July, 1914, the German Government kept raising the matter with Grey. Nicolson and Crowe again analysed the situation in a fundamentally different way to Grey. They held that the German Government was deliberately using the talks as an excuse to drive a wedge between Britain and Russia. Crowe noted:

> "The old theme: Germany may have allies, and make military and naval connections with them. England mustn't."[4]

Nicolson wrote Grey a long minute on the subject:

> "I hope that you will allow me to make an observation to you in regard to that portion of the conversation which Prince Lichnovsky had with you yesterday relating to a naval understanding with Russia. He practically warned us that if we enter into any kind of naval arrangement with Russia certain unpleasant consequences would ensue and we may, therefore, infer that if we wish to avoid consequences we must abandon any naval conversations with Russia. In short we are to abstain from taking the most elementary precautions and from discussing any arrangements which might be necessary to our defence in certain contingencies. This request is a pretty strong one

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1 Grey to Buchanan, 7.v.1914, (copy) Grey Papers, F.O.800/74.

2 Buchanan to Grey, 3.iv.1914, Minute by Grey, 16.iv.1914, B.D. X(ii) 537; Grey to Bertie, 1.v.1914, B.D.X(ii)541; Note due Ministre, 24.iv.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series),155; Asquith to King George V, 14.v.1914, CAB.41/35. See also Chapter V.

3 For the German reaction see, Zechlin, E. Deutchland Zwischen Kabinettskrieg und Wirtschaftskrieg, H.Z.vol.199, pp.347 et.seq.

4 Minute by Crowe, 9.vi.1914, F.O.371/2092/25526.

The Ambassador returned to London late on the 4 July (Saturday) went straight to see Haldane,[1] and, on 6 July, Grey. He would no doubt have gone to see Grey immediately, but for the fact that Grey spent Saturdays and Sundays at his cottage at Itchen Abbas in the New Forest. In the hope that Grey would restrain Russia, Lichnovsky blurted out all he knew:

> "The Ambassador went on to speak to me privately, he said, but very seriously, as to the anxiety and pessimism he found at Berlin."

Grey was told by Lichnovsky that he:

> "knew for a fact though he did not know the details, that the Austrians intended to do something and it was not impossible that they would take military action against Serbia."

In layman's language, "not impossible" implied probability, and Grey asked:

> "Surely they did not think of taking territory?"

Even more disturbing were Lichnovsky's revelations about the attitude of the German Government. He explained to Grey that they were terrified by the increase in Russian power, the weakening of Austria, and the renewed threat of encirclement as a result of Anglo-Russian naval arrangements:

> "The Ambassador went to say that there was some feeling in Germany that trouble was bound to come add therefore it was better not to restrain Austria and let trouble come now, rather than later."[2]

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1 Haldane to Grey, 5.vii.1914, published in Maurice, Major-General Sir F., Haldane (1937), vol.I, p.348.

2 Grey to Rumbold, 6.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 32.

What Grey meant was that there was some feeling in Germany in favour of a preventive war against Russia. On 16 July - and in the intervening time Grey had had no more information from Lichnovsky - Grey told Bertie:

> "that whereas hereto Germany has feigned alarm at the encircling policy against her falsely attributed to His Majesty's Government under the inspiration of King Edward, and has made it an excuse for largely increasing the size of her Navy, she is now really frightened of the growing strength of the Russian Army, and may..... bring on a conflict with Russia at an early date before the increases in the Russian Army have their full effect and completion of Russian strategic railways."[1]

Lichnovsky indicated that it was the "militarists" and "Pan Germans" who were now having a decisive influence on policy. Bethmann Hollweg, who before the assasinations had felt he could resist their pressure, was now quoted as being "pessimistic".[2]

How then did Grey see the situation at Berlin? The modern jargon would be "hawks" and "doves"; in the jargon of half a century ago, "a war party" and "a peace party". When Lichnovsky left Grey on the morning of 6 July, the latter knew that certain groups within the German Government were in favour of making an issue of the Sarajevo crisis in order to reassert Germany's international position, and perhaps as a pretext to mount a preventive war against Russia. Even in this early part of the crisis, it is probable that the Foreign Secretary was already identifying the hawks with the military and the doves with civilians. Bethmann Hollweg was still explaining his

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 16.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/161.
2 Grey to Rumbold, 6.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 32.

situation to Grey. While Jagow, who only shortly before had asserted Germany had no interest in the Balkans,[1] was away on his honeymoon. (An institution hardly conducive to planning wars). On the other hand, Lichnovsky had indicated that the aggressive elements were military or quasi-military - the Navy League, the Pan Germans and the militarists.[2]

8. The Sarajevo Crisis.

The course of the Sarajevo Crisis is so well-known that it would be both tedious and unnecessary to examine it in detail. Here, the narrative will be confined to points of re-interpretation, in so far as these are necessary for an understanding of the British Government's attitude to the origins of the war.

Nearly all historians have agreed with Albertini[3] that Grey attached only a passing interest to the revelations of the German Ambassador. Scholars as varied in temperament and background as Fay,[4] Trevelyan,[5] and Mr. Martin Gilbert[6] have adopted the view that Grey was only anxious about the Serbian crisis after the delivery of the Austrian ultimatum.on 23 July. In this author's view, such an interpretation is erroneous;

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1 Nicolson to de Bunsen, 25.v.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171; Grey to Rumbold, 6.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 32.
3 Albertini, vol.II, pp.205-6.
4 Fay, S., The Origins of the World War (1928), vol.I, p.418.
5 Trevelyan, p.245.
6 Gilbert, M., The European Powers, 1900-1945 (1965), pp.38-39.

it is based either on faulty assumptions, or misleading evidence, or misinterpretation of evidence. These points can be dealt with in order.

Hereto scholars have seen Grey as rigidly anti-German, or at least in the hands of anti-German diplomats.[1] They have therefore expected that if Grey had been concerned he would have warned Germany not to precipitate trouble. Once one takes away the assumption that Grey was anti-German, then one would not expectito find Grey threatening Berlin.

There are two main sources of faulty evidence: memoirs; Lichnovsky's despatches. Churchill[2] and Lloyd George[3] later asserted that the crisis had gone unnoticed before the Cabinet meeting of 24 July, and they placed great emphasis on its suddenness. In fact their testimony is misleading. On the evening of 21 July Churchill had dined with Grey, and they had discussed the Serbian crisis in some detail. Moreover, it is evident that Grey told Churchill of the possibility of a general European war.[4] Albertini cites Lichnovsky's reports to Berlin as proof that Grey was optimistic.[5] Lichnovsky's despatches are unreliable: he was continually lying to his own Government; and in this case he was trying to conceal how much he had told Grey on the 6 July.

The misinterpretation of evidence has largely lain in taking Nicolson's views as being indicative of Grey's.[6] It is very foolish to consider because the Permanent Under Secretary was not concerned that Grey was not worried. Indeed, on two occasions Cambon drew his Government's attention

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1 See Introduction.
2 Churchill, W.S., The World Crisis (1923), vol.I, p.193.
3 Lloyd George, vol.I, p.54.
4 Churchill to Grey, 22.vii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88.
5 Albertini, vol.II, p.209.
6 Gilbert, pp.38-39.

to the differences between Grey and Nicolson.[1]

Against this evidence (such as it is), there is ranged a mass of material indicating that Grey was alarmed from 6 July onwards. Haldane, who was closer to Grey than any other member of the Cabinet, remembered Grey being concerned before 24 July.[2] There is an impressive amount of contemporary evidence which points to Grey's grave apprehension. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador, sent back two despatches, on 9[3] and 22 July,[4] indicating Grey was very concerned. This is confirmed by the reports of the Russian[5] and the Italian Ambassadors.[6] For the dates between 6 and 24 July, we have no less than seven different contemporary sources - Grey, Benckendorff, Imperiali, Cambon, Churchill, Ballin[7] and Bertie - which explicitly report Grey as being very apprehensive.

If Grey was apprehensive then why was his policy so insipid? The central point is that he hoped he would be able to talk the German Government back into a peaceful frame of mind, and by not threatening her he would strengthen the position of the doves against the hawks. He would thereby succeed in persuading Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow to follow the course of policy he believed had been agreed upon. The refusal of the Germans to be reassured, and their insistence on pressing the Austro-Serb crisis to war, convinced Grey that the hawks had gained

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1 Cambon to Viviani, tel., 9.vii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, 483.
Cambon to Bienvenu-Martin, 22.vii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, 559.
2 Haldane, p.270.
3 Cambon to Viviani, tel., 9.vii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, 483.
4 Cambon to Bienvenu-Martin, 22.vii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, 559.
5 Benckendorff to Sazanow, 16.vii.1914, published in, De Siebert, B., and Schreiner, G.A., Entente Diplomacy and the World War (1921), p.858.
6 Imperiali to Di Sanguiliano, tel., 15.7.1914, D.D.I. (4) XII, 233.
7 Ballin to Jagow, 24.vii.1914, G.P.39, 15889.

the upper hand, and that Germany was in the hands of a ruthless militarist group bent on aggression and domination. To follow Grey's reasoning we have to go back to 6 July.

Lichnovsky's revelations must have come as a considerable shock to Grey.[1] Only a fortnight before he had been approached about co-operating with Germany in managing any new "flare up" in the Balkans. He told his ambassadors at Paris and St.Petersburg that he trusted Germany. Moreover, for over a year Nicolson and Crowe had urged him to put no faith in German Government, and to close the ranks of the Triple Entente. During that time Grey had brushed aside their advice, and let it be known that it was unwelcome. Now, suddenly, and almost without warning, he was told that Germany was no longer in a co-operative mood. How should Grey have used British influence in the cause of peace?

There seems little doubt that Grey was psychologically committed to see his German policy through. It would have been a severe blow to his prestige in the Foreign Office if he were forced to admit that co-operation with Germany did not work. Such a course would have been tantamount to admitting that his judgement had been completely at fault.

His options were limited in other ways. In retrospect one policy seems obvious: to have informed France and Russia of the news from Berlin, and to have warned Germany - perhaps unofficially - that in the event of a general European War Britain would not remain neutral; this was the deterrence argument of the anti-German group in the Foreign Office.[2]

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1 Grey recorded that he was "disturbed by what the Ambassador had told me". Grey to Rumbold, 6.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 32.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171; Minute by Crowe, 25.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 101. The argument frequently put forward, that for constitutional reasons no such threat could have been given, does not hold water. Grey could easily have taken the German Ambassador on one side and told him that in his opinion England would not remain neutral.

There were drawbacks to such a policy. The Irish problem was itself nearing crisis point, and was fully absorbing the interest of the nation and the Cabinet: doubtless, Grey was reluctant to seize the initiative at such a moment. What was more, Lichnovsky had spoken in confidence, and it would have been a breach of trust to have compromised him. There was no certainty that a threatening policy would have brought Germany to her senses. According to Bethmann Hollweg and Lichnovsky, the hawks had been able to seize the initiative because of fear of Russia and the threat of encirclement. A bullying line might only have succeeded in strengthening "the war party" still further. Even had the firm policy been successful in getting Germany to back down, it would have meant an end to the Anglo-German détente.[1] How would his colleagues have reacted to a breach in Anglo-German relations over a Balkan dispute in which Britain had no interests directly involved? In the long run an anti-German policy was, Grey felt, bound to strengthen the militarist and aggressive tendencies in Germany and to weaken the position of the liberal sections of opinion. Haldane, who was very close to Grey, later described pre-war policy to St.Loe Strachey, and Strachey, alluding to Haldane's views, wrote:

> "You believed that there was a powerful peace party in Germany, or rather, that the party which called itself a peace party would remain in being, would grow in strength, and would ultimately control the situation if we refrained from upsetting the pacific applecart."[2]

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1 "I (Bertie) said.... it was fear of British naval intervention that prevented Germany from going to war with France about Morocco. Yes, said Grey, but we are on good terms with Germany now and we desire to avoid a revival of friction with her." - Memorandum by Bertie, 27.vi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.

2 Strachey to Haldane, 16.iv.1916, (copy), Strachey Papers.

The decisive anti-German policy was simply not practical.

The alternative policy, of informing France and Russia but not threatening Germany, had even greater drawbacks. Buchanan had warned over and over again that in the next international crisis Russia would look to Britain for support, and

> "Should we fail to give it when she appeals for it, England will not be numbered amongst her friends."[1]

As Germany herself was in an intransigent mood, Grey could hardly have appealed to Russia for moderation. He would have faced an immediate request for diplomatic support, and he was in no position to promise Russia anything. He later explained to Professor Temperley that had he tried to restrain Russia, then sheuwould have replied:

> "'Will you support us if it comes to war?' And to that we could not have given an affirmative answer."[2]

Thus British interests demadded that the crisis was played out in a low key.

The Foreign Secretary clung to his original intention of using Germany to restrain Austria. The basis of his policy in July, 1914, was to conciliate Germany so that the hawks at Berlin and Vienna would be held in check.

After his interview with Lichnovsky he did three things. Firstly, he informed the German Government that they had nothing to fear from Russia, and that there were no binding Anglo-Russian engagements; he then rreaffirmed his policy of working in co-operation with Germany,

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1 Buchanan to Grey, 18.iii.1914, B.D.X(ii), 528.
2 Professor H. Temperley's record of an interview with Grey, Spender Papers, add.56386.

and appealed to Bethmann Hollweg to follow the same policy as he had done during the Balkan Wars.[1] Secondly, he saw the French[2] and Russian[3] Ambassadors, and informed them that he anticipated a serious crisis to arise as a result of the Sarajevo murders. What he did not mention was that he gained this information from Lichnovsky. He hoped to awaken St. Petersburg and Paris to the dangers of the situation, but he did not want them to feel that the German and Austrian Governments harboured any malevolent intentions. He advised Cambon and Benckendorff to urge restraint at St.Petersburg, and asked the Russians to do all they could to convince Germany that they had no aggressive ambitions. Thirdly, he sent to Berlin for confirmation of Lichnovsky's story.[4]

Nothing in the course of the following ten days - 9 - 20 July - indicated that his policy was bearing fruit. J.A.Spender called at the Foreign Office, and reported that the German and Austrian Embassies were trying to bring the British press round to a pro-Austrian line in the Serbian dispute.[5] From Vienna, De Bunsen reported that Austria, encouraged by Germany, was going to take strong action against Serbia,[6] this report was confirmed by intelligence gleaned from the Austrian Embassy in London.[7] The Foreign Secretary grew ever more alarmed. On 16 July, he told Benckendorff that Germany might not restrain Austria, and the Ambassador observed:

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1 Grey to Rumbold, 9.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 41.
2 Grey to Bertie, 8.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 38.
3 Grey to Buchanan, 8.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 39.
4 Grey to Rumbold, 6.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 32.
5 Memorandum by Spender, August 1914, Spender Papers, add.46392.
6 De Bunsen to Grey, tel., 16.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 50.
7 Minute by Crowe, 16.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 50.

"Grey did not seem very reassured..... I have no doubt Grey has used very plain language at Berlin and Vienna."[1]

Benckendorff was mistaken. Grey was still deliberately refraining from threatening Germany, and was hoping that the German civilian Government was going to save the situation.

By the 20 July the situation had grown so alarming that the Foreign Secretary called Lichnovsky to see him. Berlin now had their Ambassador on a much shorter rein,[2] and when questioned he was evasive. But Lichnovsky was a poor liar, and the hair-raising policy of his own Government had brought him to the edge of nervous despair: his suspicious behaviour was not such as to encourage confidence.[3] The interview did nothing to alleviate Grey's anxieties.[4]

Between 20 - 22 July, Grey changed the tack of his policy. He was so depressed by the news from Berlin, that he resolved to by-pass the Germans in the search for a peaceful solution to the crisis. He suggested to the Russians that should the crisis deepen, then they should negotiate directly with Vienna.[5] Sazanow[6] and Poincaré[7] (on the State Visit to Russia) refused to countenance such a course of action, and expressed a desire for the Entente to act as a single diplomat entity.

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1 Siebert and Schreiner, p.856.
2 Despatches to Lichnovsky in D.D.
3 Cambon to Bienvenu-Martin, tel., 24.vii.1914, D.D.F.(3rd Series)XI, 23.
4 Cambon to Bienvenu-Martin, 22.vii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) X, 559; Grey to Rumbold, 20.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 66.
5 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 20.vii.1914, D.D. XI, 68.
6 Buchanan to Grey, tel.22.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 76. Buchanan to Grey, tel.23.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 84.
7 Poincaré, R., Au Service de la France (1926) vol.IV, pp.252-253.

Grey, unable to agree to such a policy, returned to his original plan of persuading Berlin to help to resolve the crisis.

At the same time the situation was not entirely black. Rumbold reported that Jagow denied having any knowledge of what Austria intended to do, and that he had affirmed his wish to help resolve the crisis.[1] This telegram started another round in the dispute between the pro and anti-German factions in the Foreign Office. Grey felt that Jagow was telling the truth, and that he was to be relied on. Spender, who was a daily visitor at the Foreign Office during July, 1914, recorded that Grey told him he had faithlin Jagow and believed what he told him.[2] Crowe again tried to show Grey that he was being duped; he argued that there were no moderate elements at Berlin, and that the idea of dove faction was a chimera. The true German object waw to break the Entente:

> "the attitude of the German Government..... does not bear the stamp of straightforwardness..... They appear to be relying on the British Government to reinforce German and Austrian threats at Belgrade; it is clear that if the British Government did intervene in this case, or by addressing admonitions to St. Petersburg, the much desired breach between England and Russia would be brought one step nearer realization."[3]

In spite of Crowe's advice, Grey continued to believe that there was a strong "dove" faction at Berlin, and that the best chances of peace lay in strengthening their position by being as moderate as possible. The "peace party" was felt to consist of Bethmann Hollweg, the Kaiser and Von Jagow. On the 29 July, 1914, Herbert Samuel, writing to his wife, indicated that the Cabinet agreed with Grey that there were

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1 Rumbold to Grey, tel., 22.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 77.
2 Memorandum by Spender, August, 1914, Spender Papers, add.56392.
3 Minute by Crowe, 22.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 77.

definite "hawk" and "dove" parties at Berlin.

> "It remains to be seen," he wrote, "whether or not Germany regarding war as inevitable, will then strike at France. There is still a hope that under the influence of the Emperor and Bethmann Hollweg, the Chancellor, she may not."[1]

With the delivery of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia there arose the last dispute over German policy between Crowe and Nicolson, on the one hand, and Grey and Tyrrell, on the other. The former insisted that Germany sought domination, and the only way to halt the plunge into war was to come out openly on the side of France and Russia. Only direct opposition to Germany would check her aggressive policy and save a breach in Anglo-Russian relations. Any other policy would merely encourage the German Government to continue as they had been doing.[2] Grey again rejected Crowe's advice and insisted:

> "It is premature to make any statement to France and Russia yet."[3]

He held that the best chance of peace lay not in threatening Germany, but in reassuring her: only then would the "pacific elements" in the German Government have sufficiently strong argument to resist the civilians. In this matter Grey carried the Cabinet with him. McKenna, the Home Secretary, remembered:

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1 Samuel to his wife, 29.vii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.
2 Minutes by Crowe and Nicolson, 25.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 101.
3 Minute by Grey, undated, certainly 25.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 101.

> "The resolute determination of the Cabinet, led by Grey in this respect," was "not to cause war by an assurance given by us in advance either to France or to Russia."[1]

On 29 July, Samuel wrote:

> "Meanwhile our action is held in suspense for if both sides do not know what we shall do both will be less willing to run risks."[2]

It is evident both from these statements and the Foreign Office records that Grey was deliberately refraining from threatening Germany. On 30 July, he made a last desperate effort to change the balance of forces at Berlin. Britain would guarantee Germany against the encirclement she feared:

> "If peace can be preserved," he instructed Goschen to tell Bethmann Hollweg, "and this crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she would be assured that no hostile or aggressive policy would be pursued against her or allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately."[3]

The real architect of this policy of conciliation may well have been Tyrrell. It was Tyrrell who had intimate contacts with German Embassy, and he was almost certainly counselling moderation so that Jagow and Bethmann Hollweg would be in a stronger position to resist the war party.

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1 McKenna to Spender, 8.v.1929, Spender Papers, add.56386. This statement could not have meant that Grey was frightened of Russia provoking Germany - see General notes by Lord Crewe in Spender Papers, add.56386 - its only meaning was that he did not wish to provoke Germany.

2 Samuel to his wife, 29.vii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

3 Grey to Goschen, tel., 30.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 303.

In late July, 1914, he had an argument about the anti-German editorials of the Times with his friend Sir Valentine Chirol.[1] On 31 July, Tyrrell wrote bitterly about the belligerent tone of the Times which, he believed, would encourage German fears, and thereby German aggression:

> "The 'new style' and line the Times takes makes me fairly sick."[2]

Grey's policy was, of course, a failure, and by 2 August the German violation of Luxemburg's neutrality had convinced him that the "hawks" at Berlin were firmly in control of German policy. Herbert Samuel, writing that evening, described Grey's mood at the moment he realised that all was in ruins:

> "He is outraged by the way in which Germany and Austria have played with the vital interests of civilisation, and have put aside all attempts at accommodation made by himself and others, and while continuing to negotiate have marched steadily to war."[3]

At this point everything about German policy in the previous month must have slotted into place. The groups which had been pressing for a policy of adventure had gained control, just as Lichnovsky had told him afqun weeks before. They had refused to accept a negotiated settlement and had deliberately precipitated the conflict. The very way in which they had systematically lied to him, and betrayed his trust - and for a man with Grey's morality this was perhaps the worst crime - convinced him of their utter ruthlessness.

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1 Dr.Zara Steiner, who was kind enough to read through parts of this manuscript, drew my attention to this spat.
2 Tyrrell to Ponsonby, 31.vii.1914, Arthur Ponsonby Papers.
3 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File 6 A/157. Samuel wrote two letters to his wife on this date. There is no way of differentiating between them.

Grey's analysis of the situation was accepted by the Cabinet. On 3 August, John Simon told C.P.Scott:

> "he had been entirely deceived by Germany and that I (Scott) ought to know that the evidence was overwhelming that the party which had gained control of the direction of affairs throughout the crisis had deliberately played for war. The Emperor was away on his yacht and in his absence the Crown Prince and the war party - Tirpitz and the rest - had brought matters to a point beyond control.... beyond doubt Germany could have held Austria in check and moderated her demands, but the party in power did not wish to do so."[1]

Thus when Grey pleaded with Cabinet and Commons for war, he was not asking for war against Germany, but for war against those aggressive elements in Germany that had wilfully plunged Europe into war. In the Spring of 1915, he wrote to Rennell Rodd, the Ambassador at Rome, and indicated the distinction he drew between the role of the German civilians - the doves - and the military - the hawks - in the events of July, 1914:

> "Jagow did nothing, Bethmann Hollweg trifled and the military intended war and forced it. It was a huge and gratuitous crime, the outcome of pride and ambition."[2]

9. Reports of Homecoming Diplomats.

When British diplomats returned from Berlin and Vienna, their reports on German policy in July, 1914, served to confirm Grey's views.

Sir Francis Oppenheimer, the Consul-General at Frankfurt, came back to London at the end of July. Oppenheimer was held in high regard

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1 Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 3.viii.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
2 Grey to Rodd, 6.iii.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/65.

at the Foreign Office, and his reports on German financial policy, on which he was expert, were universally praised and widely circulated. The story Oppenheimer told was that the crucial decisions had been made in Berlin in the first week of July. The military had been the decisive influence and had retained control of German policy throughout the crisis. During the long weekend of July 31 to August 3 - Monday a Bank Holiday - Oppenheimer was at the Foreign Office, and also met several Cabinet ministers in the course of discussions over the financial crisis. In Simon's statement to C.P.Scott (which has already been quoted) one can sense the influence of Oppenheimer's views.[1]

More influential than Oppenheimer was Sir Horace Rumbold. For most of July, 1914, Goschen, the Ambassador, had been absent, and Rumbold was Chargé d'Affaires at the Berlin Embassy. As early as the 11 July Rumbold had repotted that Lichnovsky's fears were probably justified.[2] Rumbold had at one time been private secretary to Lord Cromer, and it is from a letter of Cromer's that we can judge the sort of story Rumbold told at the Foreign Office. Rumbold believed that the crucial decisions had been made by the German military in the first week of July. Even more striking is that Cromer, in referring to Germany "egging on" Austria, was - on 14 August - already using the term the "blank cheque".[3]

Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the Ambassador at Vienna, also expressed the view that the main culprit was Germany; that the Austrians would

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1 Oppenheimer, pp.228-233.
2 Rumbold to Grey, 11.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 44.
3 Cromer to Strachey, 14,viii.1914, (copy), Cromer Papers, F.O.633/23.

not have acted without her permission and encouragement.[1]

10. Sir Edward Grey and Prussian Militarism.

For Grey the war was at once a calamity for civilisation and a personal tragedy on an enormous scale. He would examine and re-examine the diplomacy of the Sarajevo crisis; he hoped to convince himself that he had done all he could to avert the war. His own involvement played heavily on his own conscience:

> "there was often a wakeful time," he wrote in his memoirs, "round about four o'clock in the morning - that time when vitality is low and spirits are depressed and the mind is often prey to doubts and anxieties. I would try one hypothesis after another, considering what hope there would have been in any of them."[2]

Shortly after Grey left office, Bertie wrote to Hardinge:

> "I am sure he felt acutely Boche accusations that he could have prevented the war and that he wondered to himself whether he had done those things he ought not to have done or left undone those things he ought to have done."[3]

It became important to Grey, for personal as well as political reasons, to believe that nothing would have dissuaded the German military from their evil designs. He insisted that they had planned for the war and deliberately precipitated it:

> "It is all stuff to say that we could have prevented this war by declaring solidarity with France and Russia. Germany intended to force war or humiliation on France and Russia."[4]

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1 De Bunsen to Grey, 12.viii.1914, F.O.371/2173/41920.
2 Grey, vol.II, p.47.
3 Bertie to Hardinge, 16.xii.1916, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/163.
4 Grey to Bertie, 16.ix.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.

Or again:

> "The German Government, in the hands of this military caste, prepared for this war, planned it and chose the time for it."[1]

If the military caste had gained control of German policy in July, 1914, then what had happened to the civilians in whom he had placed his trust? Crowe and Nicolson, who did not subscribe to Grey's "hawks" and "doves" theory, had no need to explain this.[2] They held that there never had been a peace party. Grey was never quite certain on this point. Once or twice he wrote as if the military had seized control almost in style of coup d'état: the German military had "dominated" Germany,[3] and the civilians were "machtlos".[4] But for the most part he seems to have felt that Jagow and Bethmann Hollweg had been weak and given in to the military. At any rate they were only the front men for the war party, and had they been left alone then everything would have been alright.

In certain respects Grey's attitude towards German policy in July 1914 remained consistent. The belief that there were two parties in Germany was carried through the Sarajevo crisis into the war. In other ways his ideas did change: he came to attribute different motives and characteristics to the German military party. During the Sarajevo crisis there had been two theories of German foreign policy - and by and large these two rival views remain to-day. Crowe held that authoritarian and expansionist ideals were rooted into the very fabric of the German Empire;

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1 Grey to Strauss, 26.ix.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/111.
2 For Crowe and Nicolson's war aims, see Chapter 3.
3 Grey to Strauss, 26.ix.1914, (copy) Grey Papers, F.O.800/111.
4 Grey, vol.II, p.26. Why Grey used a German word when he had no knowledge of the language is a mystery.

aggressive militarism permeated all branches and aspects of German society. Grey and Tyrrell had equally recognised aggressive tendencies in Germany, and they also believed that certain sections of German society were imbued with the spiritual ideals which Crowe held characterised the German system in its entirety. But they felt that the influence of these sinister values rested largely on what to-day we would call a "frustration-aggression complex," brought on, above all, by the Russian menace.[1] During the war Grey modified his ideas: he began to see the German military party as the very incarnation of evil. His outlook tended to be less and less the function of his experience, and more and more a reflection of his prejudices and education. English Liberal historians - and perhaps Lord Acton is the best example - had explained history as a struggle between antithetical spiritual forces: a conflict between liberty and absolutism, between equality and domination. For Acton all international villains of the modern world - Charles V, Philip II and Louis XIV - were a manifestation of a single political ideal. Their actions flowed from a lust for domination; their behaviour was characterised by a ruthless subordination of all values to feed an insatiable craving for power.[2] This craving for universal domination had no causes and no roots, it was in the very ether of history. Such ideas shaped Grey's attitudes. Grey came to see the Prussian military

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1 Two memoranda by Bertie - 27.vi.1914, F.O.800/171; 16.vii.1914, F.O.800/161 - bring this point out very clearly.

2 In this respect Acton's famous lecture, The Beginnings of the Modern State, is especially illuminating, Lord Acton, Lectures on Modern History, introduction by Trevor-Roper, H. (Fontana, 1960) pp.42-60.

party not as an outgrowth of German history and German society, but as an outbreak of a spiritual cancer always latent in international relations. Writing on Louis XIV, Acton had observed that:

> "the idea of a predominant Power in Europe was a part of absolutism. It proceeded from the same love of authority, the same pride in greatness, the same disregard for the equal rights of men, the same pretentions to superiority and prerogative, international as well as national."[1]

Grey, writing on the German military party, used the same concepts and even the same vocabulary:

> "The Prussian military caste has dominated Germany and the whole of the West of Europe is in danger of being dominated by it...."[2] it (the action of the German military caste) was a huge and gratuitous crime, the outcome of pride and ambition."[3]

As we shall shortly observe, this simplistic view of the German problem influenced Grey's war aims.

11. The Destruction of Prussian Militarism.

What precisely did Grey mean when he spoke of destroying Prussian militarism? He desired to destroy the power and influence of the German military party that had brought about the war; he refused to consider concluding a peace with the German Government as it existed. Military defeat would shatter the charisma of militarism and destroy the internal ascendency of the military hierarchy.

In October, 1914, Grey wrote:

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1 Acton, p.236.
2 Grey to Strauss, 26.ix.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/111.
3 Grey to Rodd, 6.111.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/65.

> "I can see nothing for it but to fight on till we get a peace that will secure us against Prussian militarism. Once freed of that, Germany will have nothing to fear, because we shall have no more to fear from her."[1]

It is difficult to put any other construction upon the phrase "once freed of that" than an intention to destroy the German Government as it existed. The point emerges forcibly in despatches to Washington in late December, 1914, and early January, 1915. This correspondence was prompted by rumours that Germany might be willing to make peace. Grey outlined two major principles for British war aims: the evacuation and indemnity of Belgium; security against further German aggression. On the second point, he saw the main safeguards in either the destruction of Germany as a Great Power, or:

> "an internal change which made Germany a democratic state emancipated from the rule of the Prussian Military Party..... but it cannot be imposed from outside, though it may be an indirect result of the defeat of Germany in the war."[2]

The Foreign Secretary dismissed any idea of permanently crushing Germany as being impractical as well as being impolitic. This left the second alternative. Grey spelt out his position in a telegram sent on 2 January, 1915.

> "I gather the President's friend (House) considers there is no chance of the United States Government countersigning any agreement for the preservation of future peace. If this is so it is difficult to see how a durable peace can be secured without the

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1 Grey to Roosevelt, 20.x.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/110. Published in Grey, vol.II, p.41.
2 Grey to Spring-Rice, tel., 22.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84.

"complete exhaustion of one side or the other. (The) German Government single us out for special animosity and work up hatred against us in Germany by the most unjust charge that we were responsible for this war and (we were) the aggressors in it. A peace made while this temper continues would leave us exposed to certain attack in the future unless we spent even more largely than before on armaments."[1]

Here the enemy is specifically defined as being the German Government. The war is to be a war a outrance, for nothing else will provide a secure peace. Victory for what? A victory to destroy the existing German Government, or to be precise the Government controlled by the German military.

There could be no point in discussing peace with Bethmann Hollweg, Jagow and the Kaiser because they were puppets of the military. As Grey put it, the German Chancellor had been:

"So false and mean that I distrust him altogether."[2]

Asquith's attitude towards the German military party was very similar to Grey's. They had enjoyed the closest of relations during the July crisis, and Asquith made several statements insisting on the need to destroy Prussian militarism. If there was a difference between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, then it was a difference of emphasis. Asquith was influenced by his legal training, and he looked upon German aggression as criminal activity. The wrong-doer would have to compensate for the wrong done, and be punished with a

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1 Grey to Spring-Rice, tel., 2.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/85.
2 Grey Minute, undated, c.1.i.1915, on Bertie to Grey, 28.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/56A.

peace that was harsh enough to convince the public of its failure.[1]

Haldane also shared Grey's views. During the July crisis Grey was staying at his house, and they must have discussed the situation daily. The Lord Chancellor thought that the influence of the war party would have to be destroyed if there was to be any certainty of a stable peace.

> "It is desirable," he wrote in a memorandum for the Cabinet, "that the German military hierarchy be dethroned."[2]

When members of the British Government insisted on the need to destroy Prussian militarism, they meant to bring down the German Government, dominated as they believed by a military clique. This was - with the evacuation of Belgium - the foremost of British war aims.

Even in 1916, when Grey doubted that the war could be brought to a decisive conclusion,[3] he and his civil servants still clung to the idea of discrediting the war party by forcing them to accept defeat. Sir Louis Mallet set down the Foreign Office view:

> "The German Government's theory has been that they have been the victims of a nefarious conspiracy which culminated in a treacherous attack upon Germany by invidious enemies. If they can show their people they have defeated their enemies, maintained their European possessions intact, got back their colonies, and preserved the integrity of the Austrian and Ottoman Empires, far from being a revolution, the military party will be regarded as the saviour of society and the Hohenzollern and Prussian system more firmly established than ever."[4]

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1 Asquith's notes written in pencil on the back of a Foreign Office telegram, undated, c.23.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84.

2 The Future Relations of the Great Powers, 8.iv.1915, by Haldane, CAB.37/127/17.

3 Grey to Asquith, 15.ii.1916, Asquith Papers, MS.29: Memorandum by Bertie, 11.viii.1916, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.

4 Mallet to Grey, 22.ii.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/109.

Grey, though sickened by the slaughter of war, could see no way round this argument:[1]

> "he hankers after peace..... on the other hand he cannot imagine or devise any terms unless Germany admits defeat."[2]

In the summer of 1916, a Foreign Office Committee was established to look into the question of war aims. Unfortunately, the minutes and report of this committee have disappeared, and we are left only with a memorandum by Sir Ralph Paget and Sir William Tyrrell,[3] written in August, 1916.[4] This memorandum is probably a shortened version of a

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1 Grey to Mallet, 22.11.1916, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/109; Grey, vol.II, p.125.

2 Esher, vol.III, p.298.

3 Foreign Office Memorandum, 7.viii.1914, by Paget and Tyrrell, CAB.29/1/P-5.

4 Paget, in a private letter (see footnote immediately following) refers to having been "one of committee". It is evident that this must have been something more than a meeting of Paget and Tyrrell. The constitution of the committee is open to question: two members were Paget and Tyrrell. In a note Drummond wrote to Grey, he referred to "the committee I have ventured to propose for considering our desiderata as regards the reconstruction of Europe." (Minute by Drummond, 6.iv.1916, on the back of Bryce to Grey, 6.iv.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/106) Drummond suggested Paget, Tyrrell and O'Bierne. O'Bierne could not have been a member because he died on board the Hampshire with Kitchener. O'Bierne was an expert on Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and it is possible that George Russell Clerk or Sir Louis Mallet (or both) took the seat Drummond had intended for him. In January, 1917, there was a memorandum on war aims drawn up by Mallet, Tyrrell and Clerk. (CAB.16/36/TC/27) There is no obvious reason for this co-authorship save for the fact that they had all been members of the Foreign Office Committee. (Paget's name being absent, because he was now at Copenhagen). There were probably only one or two copies of the committee's report, and it was never circulated to the Cabinet. What happened to copies that did exist is a mystery. They may well have been cannibalised by the later inter-departmental committees on war aims.

much larger report. Paget described, in a private letter, the overwhelming importance which the Foreign Office Committee had attached to destroying the Prussian military party:

> "It may interest you to hear that for some time before I left the Foreign Office I was one of a committee appointed to draw up recommendations as to what our terms should be..... ...Of course everything depends on whether we are able to dictate terms to Germany, but we must go on until we can do so, otherwise we may consider the war as practically lost. We should get into endless difficulties if we started negotiations and bargaining, and moreover it would mean that the military party in Germany still possessed life and its thought would be to prepare for a war of revenge. All this has been stated in our report."[1]

There is insufficient evidence to say precisely how Grey intended to destroy the Prussian military party, though a picture of reasonable coherence can be put together. Grey had never been to Germany and he had no knowledge of the language. So in deciding how Prussian militarism was to be destroyed, he was influenced as much by his political philosophy and intuition, as by anyyempirical knowledge of German conditions. He believed that the military party was a dictatorship with a charismatic appeal, and he perceived that defeat in war would bring social, political and economic upheaval. He felt that an allied victory would discredit the military regime and its ideals, and they would be swept away by revolution. This is almost certainly what he meant when he said, Germany might become a democratic state as "the indirect result of defeat". It is further implied in his many statements

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1 Paget to Findlay, 2.x.1916, (copy), Paget Papers, add.51256.

that Germany would have to admit she had been defeated. This was the general Foreign Office[1] view, and it was shared by the military.

In the early months of the war British military leaders had hoped to march into Germany and overthrow the German Government. By January, 1915, they recognised that the overthrow of Prussianism in Germany would have to come about as a result of an internal revolution:

> "He (French) does not envisage without the aid of some additional Power a crushing of Germany's military ascendency unless it be through German internal troubles consequent on want of food and munitions or disappointment at the non-existence of alleged victories."[2]

While Grey had the imagination to see that military defeat would bring with it dynamic social and political change, he lacked the experience to understand that stable liberal democracies cannot be established overnight. The Foreign Secretary took his ideas from Liberal political theory and his understanding of English history. He felt that liberal democracy was the highest political condition for mankind. Like many liberals (even to this day) he could not accept that the nature of government is a reflection of the values and the structure of society-in its totality. He considered that the defeat of militarism would lead to a new political system and an altered climate of opinion. It never occurred to him that defeat might only convince Germans that they should fight the next war more efficiently than the last. It seemed inevitable that in defeat the military caste

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1 Mallet to Grey, 22.11.1916, Grey Papers, F.O.800/109.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 21.1.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/167.

would be swept awey and a German democracy would be established. This would be a great achievement, for just as he believed that the Prussian system was the embodiment of an evil spiritual force, so he believed that liberal democracies embodied a pure love for peace and equality among nations. Once Germany had been cleansed of her lust for domination, she could take her place in the society of nations:

> "We wish..... the establishment somehow of a Germany not dominated by a military caste: a nation that will look at liberty and politics from the same point of view as we do, and who will deal with us on equal terms and in good faith."[1]

12. Conclusion.

For the British Government during the First World War the destruction of Prussian militarism was as important as was the destruction of National Socialism for their successors a quarter of a century later. (Indeed, if we are to believe Professor Fischer it was the same conflict). In many respects the policies in the two World Wars were similar: in both cases it was deeply felt that Britain was waging an ideological war against an aggressive, anti-Liberal and sinister political philosophy. A philosophy that formed the creed of a party that had been responsible for the war.

Yet it is curious that while historians have never doubted that the high object of the Second World War was to destroy the Nazi Party, few have placed any emphasis on the destruction of the German military party during the First World War. The reason for this neglect lies partly in

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1 Grey to Strauss, 26.ix.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/111.

a confusion over semantics. Grey and Asquith tended to speak of destroying militarism, and it is by no means obvious from their public statements that they equated militarism with a hawk party that had brought about the war. To the untrained eye it could well seem that the claim to be fighting to destroy militarism was just propaganda. Moreover historians have been mislead in thinking Grey's policy was resolutely anti-German. The détente with Germany has been neglected, and scholars have not seen that between 1912 and 1914 Grey trusted the German Government. They failed to grasp that Grey perceived two influences in German foreign policy.

These technical errors flow in large part from a single source: the anti-war revulsion of the 1920's. Men closed their hearts and minds to the issues involved in the First World War. In 1917, Siegfried Sassoon, in his Poem To Any Dead Officer, ridiculed those statesmen who said England was fighting against militarism:

> "Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,
> And tell him that our politicians swear
> They won't give in till Prussian Rule's been trod
> Under the Heel of England.... Are you there? .....
>
> Yes..... and the war won't end for at least two years;
> But we've stacks of men.... I'm blind with tears,
> Staring into dark. Cheero!
> I wish they'd killed you in a decent show."[1]

It was the sentiments expressed by Sassoon that coloured the way in which men came to look upon the ideals Grey held so dearly.

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1 Up the Line to Death: The War Poets 1914-1918, selected and arranged by Gardiner, B., (1964), pp.98-99.

CHAPTER III

WESTERN EUROPE: BELGIUM, FRANCE AND GERMANY.

1. Introduction

When, in early August, 1914, the Cabinet were deciding what eventualities should bring Britain into the war in Europe, the main concern was to prevent Germany-controlled,as most ministers believed,by a military caste bent on aggression and domination[1] - from imposing her mastery on the North-West of Europe. In marching her armies through Belgium, Germany challenged strategic dogmas long cherished in Britain, and re-awakened fears of Germany's threat to British security.

So when the British Government came to consider what terms of peace would be consonant with British interests, it sought to ensure that in years to come Western Europe and the British Isles would be free from the shadow of further German aggression: Germany would have to evacuate Belgium, and pay compensation for the wrong she had done to her; she was to retrocede the territories she had seized from France in 1871; she would have to see her battlefleet so reduced in size that neither Briton nor German would doubt that the days of Germany's challenge to Britain's maritime supremacy were at an end.

2. Western Europe in the Decision to go to War.

That Britain went to war because Grey had entangled the nation in a web of commitment to France, or because Britain was legally and morally bound

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1 Chapter I.

to go to war to defend Belgium from an external attack, are ideas that have entered into the mythology of modern English history. Myths started by politicians and repeated by historians. The Cabinet opted for war in order to uphold Britain's strategic interest in the independence of the North-West of Europe. This same self-interest was the main influence on the development of British war aims with regard to the North-West of Europe. There was a continuity of national self-interest, not of international obligation.

As soon as war broke out, politicians were saying that Britain had been dragged in by secret undertakings given to France. In August, 1914, Ramsey Macdonald wrote:

> "I do not care whether the House of Commons ratified treaties or a committee of the House of Commons were constituted to appear to look into foreign business, we should have probably have been in this war, committed by a mistaken view of honour and a web, of almost intangible statements, interests and desires."[1]

After the war, disenchanted radicals[2] published their accounts of the events leading up to war, and they too alleged that it was commitment to France that brought about Britain's entry into the Great War. Our great histories of the origins of the war of 1914 play on the Anglo-French Entente as a sure rung in that ladder of escalation which turned a Balkan dispute into a conflict of global dimensions. Bernadotte Schmitt's comments on the European alliance system - of which he viewed the Anglo-French Entente as one part - are typical of the views of scholars of his generation.

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1 Macdonald to Morel, 24.viii.1914, Morel Papers, Box F.8.

2 Loreburn, Earl, How the War Came (1919); Morley of Blackburn, Viscount, Memorandum on Resignation (1928), Morley's account was published posthumously.

> "Each year that passed bound all more closely to the Wheel of Fate, until in July, 1914, none saw any escape from a war which directly concerned only two of the Great Powers."[1]

Of all those who have asserted that the Anglo-French Entente brought Britain into the war, only Lord Loreburn and Lord Morley could have claimed to have had first-hand knowledge of the deliberations of Liberal Cabinets before 1914, and on close examination even their evidence is dubidisble. Loreburn had left the Cabinet in 1912, and he did not know what went on at the crucial Cabinet meetings before the outbreak of war. Morley was a member of the Cabinet in July and early August, 1914, but none-the-less his account is unreliable. To put the point quite bluntly, Morley was senile, and could not follow what was going on. His condition was so bad that his colleagues found him an embarrassment. It was noted that:

> "Morley..... is now so old that the views he expresses are sadly inconsequent and inconsistent."[2]

Like many old men, Morley was gripped with certain ideas fixes, and one of these was that Grey had committed Britain to go to war. It is a symptom of Morley's mental decline that while this is the theme of his Memorandum on Resignation, he never once shows that the Cabinet went along with Grey in wanting to go to war to defend France from German aggression.

We now possess sufficient documentary evidence to be able to say quite certainly that in August, 1914, the Cabinet refused to go to war to defend

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1 Schmitt, B., The Coming of the War (New York, 1930), pp. 3-4 for similar views expressed by an English historian, see Gooch, G.P., Historical Surveys and Portraits (1966), p.217.

2 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

France against Germany. The question of what Grey had, or had not, promised France becomes irrelevant, for even had the Foreign Secretary morally committed Britain, the Cabinet did not feel itself to be bound. In September, 1914, Sir Arthur Nicolson wrote in disgust to Hardinge:

> "You will no doubt have read the White Paper (The Blue Book of Documents relating to the Sarajevo Crisis) - but I may tell you <u>quite privately</u> that I passed an anxious forty hours at one moment. The Cabinet were not prepared to stand by France - and the argument was used that the quarrel originally an Austro-Serb one - then developing into a Russo-German-Austro-Serb one had only brought in France because she was bound by Treaty to come in - and we were free from obligation to any party, and as British interests were not for the present involved we should stay out and hold ourselves free to act as circumstances might demand."[1]

Nicolson's account is borne out by a letter of Herbert Samuel, written to his wife on 2 August, in which he described the events in the Cabinet meeting of that morning:

> "I held we were not entitled to carry England into the war for the sake of our goodwill to France or for the sake of maintaining the strength of France and Russia against that of Germany and Austria. This opinion was shared by the majority of the Cabinet."[2]

Neither is there anything in the despatches of Grey or Cambon to indicate that it was the Anglo-French Entente that brought Britain into the World War. Indeed, quite the reverse, Grey told the French Government that;

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1 Nicolson to Hardinge, 5.ix.1914, (copy) Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
2 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

> "the present situation differed entirely from the Morocco incidents ..... France must take her decision at this moment without reckoning on an assistance that we are not now in a position to promise."[1]

It would be quite wrong to believe that Foreign Office civil servants,[2] who believed Britain had an obligation to France, and Grey,[3] who wanted the Cabinet to agree to go to war to defend France, slowly gained the upper hand on this issue. It was Grey who gave way. Lloyd George informed the Editor of the Manchester Guardian:

> "Grey had, under pressure, agreed that if Germany would respect Belgium neutrality he would not insist on supporting France. (Perhaps, G said, he knew she wouldn't)."[4]

Nicolson was furious with Grey for giving way, and in a stormy interview told him, "You will render us a by-word among nations."[5]

The belief that Britain had a binding legal obligation to Belgium, which obliged her to go to war, also emerged at the very moment when Britain entered the European conflict. On 6 August, Asquith told the Commons:

> "we are fighting ..... to fulfil a solemn international obligation .... not only of law but of honour."[6]

Here Asquith was not being quite open. The importance of Belgium was strategic, and questions of law and of honour had not been a decisive influence in the Cabinet's decision to go to war.

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1 Grey to Bertie, tel., 1.viii.1914, B.D. XI, 426.
2 Memorandum by Crowe, 31.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 369; H.Nicolson, pp.417-420.
3 Harcourt to Lloyd George, undated, c.2.viii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C/13.
4 Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 3-4.x.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
5 H.Nicolson, p.419; the row is also described by Nicolson pers in a letter to Hardinge, 5.ix.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
6 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), Fifth Series, LXV, column 2079.

There were two legal interpretations of the Treaty of 1839, which had established the neutrality of Belgium. The controversy arose because the Treaty was a child of European Concert, and was a collective agreement signed by all the Powers - Austria, France, Prussia, Russia and the United Kingdom. The question was whether the responsibility to see that the Treaty was upheld was a collective one, or whether it rested with each Power separately. If one Power refused to uphold the Treaty, were the others bound to do so? On this point there was no unanimous agreement. One school of thought held that each of the signatory Powers had an individual responsibility. It was argued that as the only States that could seriously threaten the neutrality of Belgium were the Powers that had been parties to the 1839 Treaty, the Treaty would be meaningless if legal obligations were only collective.[1] This interpretation was, however, the minority view. In 1870, Lord Granville's legal advisers had assured him that obligation was collective.[2] When the question was considered in 1905, Sir Thomas Sanderson, the then Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, was in no doubt that responsibilities were collective and not individual.[3]

The nature of the Treaty was again considered during the Sarajevo Crisis. On 27 July, the Cabinet agreed that at its next meeting (29 July)

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1 Memorandum by Crowe, 15.xi.1908, B.D. III, 311.
2 Law Officers of the Crown to Lord Granville, 6.viii.1870, B.D.III, 311.
3 Sanderson to G.S.Clark, 10.viii.1905, CAB.17/69.

the extent of Britain's obligations would be examined.[1] In the intervening period the Foreign Office circulated copies of the Treaty to the Cabinet.[2] So when the Cabinet met on 29 July, it had had time and opportunity to ponder the matter. Asquith's Cabinet, containing as it did half a dozen lawyers, was singularly well-equipped to decide whether Britain had binding legal obligations. Asquith reported to King George:

> "It is a doubtful point how far a single guaranteeing State is bound under the Treaty of 1839 to maintain Belgium neutrality if the remainder abstain or refuse. The Cabinet consider that the matter if it arises will be rather one of policy than of legal obligation."[3]

After the outbreak of war it was convenient for Asquith to legitimize Britain's entry into the conflict as being an obligation "not only of law but of honour." But clearly his own view had been that there was no legal obligation.

The theory that Britain went to war because she was bound to do so because of her commitments to France and Belgium has to be rejected. It is necessary to look elsewhere for the reasons for the Cabinet's decision to take England into the conflict in Europe. But before we pass on to the Cabinet's motives for going to war in Germany, we must clear up certain misconceptions about the Cabinet crisis in the latter part of the Sarajevo crisis.

It is well-known that on the eve of the war the Cabinet was deeply

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1 Asquith to King George V, 28.vii.1914, CAB.41/35.
2 Copies of the Belgium Treaties, and minute by Montgomery, 28.vii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C/Box 25/Folder 7.
3 Asquith to King George V, 30.vii.1914, CAB.41/35.

divided and nearly split. The causes of this disagreement have not been well explained. Most historians have spoken of "war parties", "peace parties", and uncommitted sections of the Cabinet. Jenkins has referred to "a potential 'peace party' comprising no less than ten Ministers - of a total of twenty."[1] These terms are very misleading unless they are carefully qualified. The "peace party" of which Jenkins speaks was a peace party only insofar as they would not go to war to defend France from German aggression. However, on the morning of 2 August, that is before the meeting of this peace party which Jenkins describes, eight of the ten had agreed that a German violation of the neutrality of Belgium, or a German naval attack upon the Northern Coasts of France, would bring Britain into the war.[2] In the circumstances the "potential peace party" could just as well be described as a potential war party, indeed it would be a more accurate description.

What then was the Cabinet crisis about? It was above all a phenomenon of decision-making in crisis. Neither the pace nor the rigidity of military plans was precisely anticipated. Ministers considered many more

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1 Jenkins, pp.363-364. Jenkins seems to base his account on Morley pp.14-16. Morley was clearly mistaken about the purposes of this so-called peace party. I have drawn on Samuel's letters to his wife, written daily, sometimes twice daily, during the crisis. These give a far more precise and vivid picture of the groupings in the Cabinet than does Morley's account. On a point of detail the "peace party" meeting, 1.30 - 3.00 on 2 August, was a meeting of eight and not ten Ministers. Samuel also asserts that Morley could not follow what was going on.

2 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

contingencies than in fact were possible. As late as 2 August, one minister was writing:

> "I still have hopes that Germany will neither send her Fleet down the Channel nor invade Belgium, and that we will be able to keep England at peace while rendering France the greatest of services - the protection of her northern coasts from the sea and the protection of her 150 miles of frontier with Belgium."[1]

The uncertainty over what precisely Germany would do led both sides in the Cabinet to try to force a definite decision. Grey wanted the Cabinet to agree to go to war if Germany attacked France; others demanded that as many options as possible were kept open. The Cabinet disagreed over a hypothetical instance, an eventuality that in retrospect seems absurd but at the time appeared real enough: a German attack on France that did not come through Belgium and was unaided by naval action in the Channel. There was never any doubt that a direct German challenge to British security would bring Britain into the war.

The need to keep the Low Countries out of the hands of a powerful Continental adversary had long been a tenet of British foreign policy and strategic doctrine. The whole history of the neutrality of Belgium centred around this issue. The arguments are well-known: a hostile Power which controlled Holland and Belgium would be in a position to mount an attack on the British Isles. In the War Office,[2] the Admiralty[3] and the Foreign Office the doctrine was strenuously upheld. In 1912,

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1 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.
2 General Staff Memorandum, 31.viii.1916, by Robertson, CAB.29/1/P-4.
3 Fisher to Tyrrell, 13.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/107.

Sir Eyre Crowe had gone so far as to suggest that if Belgium did not uphold her own neutrality, then Britain might find it necessary to declare war on her for not doing so.[1]

While the Cabinet considered that in legal terms responsibility under the 1839 Treaty was a joint one, they were not above using the Treaty as a pretext for entering the war. What was more, the Treaty of 1839, binding or not, was an arrangement between the Great Powers, it was not an obligation to protect Belgium from a bullying neighbour. It is important to note that when the Cabinet resolved to uphold the neutrality of Belgium, their object was not to protect Belgium but to protect British interests in Belgium's neutrality. These two objects were not at all the same thing. It was only the brave decision of Belgians to resist German aggression that allowed the British Government to present strategic necessities in the cloak of international law and honour.

It was on the morning of 2 August that the Cabinet decided that a German violation of the neutrality of Belgium would constitute a casus belli.[2] Now at this time it was not known whether Belgium would uphold her neutrality or not; indeed, hardly any communication had passed between London and Brussels. The Cabinet were prepared to invoke the Treaty of 1839 whatever proved to be the attitude of the Belgians. On the evening of

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1 Foreign Office Memorandum, February, 1912, by Crowe, CAB.17/69.
2 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

2 August, Cambon reported:

> "The Belgian Government, informed by the British Minister at Brussells of the representation of the British Government to obtain from France and Germany a renewal of the guarantee of neutrality, replied: 'That it thanked England, but that it was in a position to defend itself with its own forces.' This curious reply arrived while I happened to be with Sir Edward Grey, we were given to think that there was perhaps some secret agreement between Germany and Belgium.
>
> Sir Edward Grey remarked that whatever the case the neutrality of that Power's territory is not only a Belgian interest, it was a British interest and England must see it respected."

Thus the upholding of the neutrality of Belgium was simply a question of upholding British interests.

The question of Britain's obligation to protect the northern coasts of France was not raised in the early part of the Sarajevo crisis. It was brought up by Cambon[2] and Nicolson on the afternoon of the 1 August, after Grey had told the French Ambassador that he could give no undertaking that Britain would go to war if France were attacked by Germany. Cambon and Nicolson, shocked and dismayed by the Cabinet's decision, sought to use the Fleet question as a means of persuading the Cabinet to reverse its decision.[3] Grey agreed to raise the matter in the Cabinet on the following morning.[4]

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1 Cambon to Viviani, tel., 2.viii.1914, D.D.F. (Series 3) XI, 612.
2 Grey to Bertie, tel., 1.viii.1914, B.D. XI, 426.
Cambon to Viviani, tel., 1.viii.1914, D.D.F. (Series 3) XI, 532.
3 Nicolson to Hardinge, 5.ix.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375.
4 B.D. XI, 424: Grey later said that the question of the protection of the northern Coasts of France had first been raised by one of the "peace party" in the Cabinet, but the above minute indicates that it was Grey who was pushing the matter at the crucial moment, Grey, vol.II, p.2.

The Foreign Secretary had two formidable arguments: it was at the request of the British Admiralty that France had concentrated her Fleet in the Western Mediterranean and Britain here in Home Waters; it would have been a grave risk to national security if a German Fleet were allowed to operate freely in the Channel and gain predominance there. These arguments carried weight with the Cabinet: it was agreed, with the single exception of John Burns, that Britain could now allow Germany to control the Channel, and that if she attempted to attack the northern coasts of France then this would constitute a casus belli. It may well have been at this meeting - the morning of the 2 August - that Lloyd George passed a note to Masterman: "What is your view of what we ought to do?" To which Masterman replied: "If I had to decide I would guarantee Belgium and the Fleet policy. If Germany agrees to that no war."[1]

This was the consensus of opinion in the Cabinet. Herbert Samuel, writing that evening, explained:

> "I expressed my own conviction that we should be justified in joining the war ..... for the protection of the northern coasts of France, which we could not afford a see bombarded by the German Fleet or occupied by the German army ..... We sanctioned a statement by Grey to the French Ambassador[2] this afternoon, to be followed by a statement in Parliament tomorrow, that we will take action if the German Fleet comes down the Channel to attack France."[3]

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1 Lloyd George to Masterman, and Masterman to Lloyd George, undated, c.2.viii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C/13.
2 Grey to Bertie, tel., 2.viii.1914, B.D. XI, 487; Cambon to Viviani, tel., 2.viii.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series) XI, 612.
3 Samuel to his wife, 2.viii.1914, Samuel Papers, File A/157.

As it was, Germany undertook not to attack the Channel coast of France,[1] and it was the march through Belgium that brought about British entry into the war.

The Cabinet decided what circumstances would determine British entry into the war before Germany had attacked Belgium and before she was at war with France. The principles which conditioned the Cabinet's decision were clear: to maintain naval supremacy and safeguard the security of the British Isles. The distinction between the desire to maintain a general European balance of power and a desire to maintain a more limited one in the North-West of Europe was not a moral one, it was simply a difference of interpretation over British interests. But it had very interesting repercussions.

Having made their decision to go to war if Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium, or attacked the northern coasts of France, the Cabinet then waited. This delay allowed, and almost by pure chance, the nation to fight under the banner of international law and as the protector of small states against strong and cruel neighbours. Asquith saw that the appeal of the King of the Belgians for assistance had immense propaganda value. It was argued that Britain was defending Belgium against German aggression, and a virtue was made of necessity. The consequence of this political and moral slight of hand were far-reaching. Englishmen could fight with an easy conscience, and the world could be told that British policy was moved by high moral principles. The Government were lucky in being able

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1 Communication from German Embassy, 3.viii.1914, B.D. XI, 531.

to pass off a policy grounded on the logic of realpolitik as a selfless act in the service of international comity.

3. Alsace-Lorraine.

Britain did not enter the Great War as the ally of France and Russia, and technically she was free from commitment to them. She was not bound to make peace in concert with the Franco-Russian Alliance. Such a state of affairs was obviously unsatisfactory; in the long run it was bound to lead to mutual suspicion and recrimination. At the beginning of September, 1914, France and Russia proposed that Britain should become party to their alliance.[1] Crowe[2] and Nicolson[3] were very much in favour of agreeing to this request, for as the Permanent Under Secretary explained:

> "unless we all stand together we shall assuredly fall and we could not give greater pleasure to Germany than to decline to sign."

Grey agreed; from the very beginning of the war he had taken it for granted that:

> "if we make war in common we must obviously make peace in common."[4]

The Cabinet[5] were less happy about associating Britain with the Franco-Russian Alliance, and Grey suggested a more simple formula. Britain, France and Russia should exchange notes agreeing not to conclude a separate peace.[6] This was effectuated on the 5 September 1914.

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 2.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/46060; Buchanan to Grey, tel., 1.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/45394.
2 Minute by Crowe, 2.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/45394.
3 Minute by Nicolson, 2.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/46060.
4 Minute by Nicolson, 27.viii.1914, and Minute by Grey, undated c.27.viii.1914, F.O.371/2008/44148.
5 Asquith to King George V, 2.ix.1914, CAB.41/35.
6 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 3.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/46060.

The main difficulty in giving a pledge not to conclude a separate peace was the fear that it would turn into an obligation to realise the war aims of France and Russia. Nicolson felt that it would not:

> "The assurance by no means fetters our liberty when terms of peace are being discussed - and in no wise binds us to swallow all the terms which either of our allies wishes to impose - in fact our voice would be stronger in discussing terms of peace <u>with</u> this engagement than without it. As in the latter case our allies might consider we had no right to any voice at all as regards their terms."

In order to make the point quite clear and to strengthen Britain's bargaining position, Nicolson advised that any agreement should stipulate that:

> "No one of the allies will endeavour to exact conditions of peace without the consent of each of the other Powers."[1]

This suggestion was taken up by Asquith and the Cabinet, and the notes exchanged on the 5 September, 1914, carried a clause that the parties would not demand terms "which had not been previously concurred by both the others."[2]

The agreement of 5 September, 1914, did protect Britain from the most extravagant of French and Russian demands, but it also meant that compensation had to be found for France and Russia for their sacrifices in the war. Asquith[3] and Grey[4] always insisted that any German peace offer would have to be addressed to Britain and her allies conjointly. This was

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 2.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/46060.
2 Asquith to King George V, 4.ix.1914, CAB.41/35. Minute by Asquith, undated, c.3.ix.1914, F.O.371/2173/46060.
3 Asquith's notes, written in pencil, on back of a Foreign Office telegram, undated, c.23.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84.
4 Grey to Spring-Rice, tel., 23.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84; Grey to Buchanan, tel., 11.i.1915, repeated to Bertie, F.O.800/75.

tantamount to saying that Britain was obliged to realise at least some of the war aims of France and Russia. Such a policy may have been harsh on Germany and have constituted an unwelcome extension of British commitments, but given the paranoid characteristics of nations at war, and their consequent fickleness, it was both wise and necessary. When, in late December, 1914, there were rumours[1] that Germany would be willing to evacuate Belgium, pay compensation to her, and give securities against further attack, Asquith noted: "This, of course, will not be good enough either for France and Russia."[2] French ambitions were therefore not without interest or significance for British war aims.

The Paris Embassy regularly sent back reports as to the likely extent of France's post-war ambitions,[3] and Grey made personal enquiries of Bertie about French war aims.[4] While French claims fluctuated with the fortunes of war, it was evident the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine was the very minimum which the Republic would or could accept. Britain was therefore virtually bound to continue the war until Germany was prepared to disgorge her gains in the War of 1870.

Such a rectification in Franco-German frontier was by no means unwelcome to Grey. Before the war the Foreign Secretary had strenuously opposed supporting France in any revanchiste enterprise.[5] The traumatic experience of August, 1914, convinced him of the necessity of strengthening Western Europe against German aggression in the future. Writing to the

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1 Spring-Rice to Grey, tel., 24.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84.
2 Asquith, vol.II, p.50-51.
3 Letters from Bertie and Grahame, Grey Papers, F.O.800/56(a) and 57.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
5 H.Nicolson, p.398; F.O.371/1987/4361.

millionaire, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, with whom he shared a common interest in wild life, good works and railways, Grey explained:

> "What we wish is that those of us who survive this war should be able to live for the rest of our lives in the west of Europe free from the same menace."[1]

To his less philanthropic allies he made it clear that by this he meant the strengthening of France's eastern frontier:

> "Discussion of terms of peace is academic till (the) war has progressed sufficiently to make Germany contemplate the most obvious terms of peace such as the restitution of the Lost Provinces to France."[2]

The British Government never considered any settlement would be possible which did not include the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine. Even at the time of the House- Grey Memorandum in February, 1916, it was understood that a peace through American mediation would have to include the transfer to France of the European territories she had lost nearly half a century earlier. "I don't think," wrote Grey, "he (House) contemplated as possible any peace which did not give Alsace-Lorraine to France."[3]

To the more extravagant of French claims, such as a buffer state in the Rhenish provinces - a sort of latter day Burgundy- the British Government never gave much thought. The danger was always that France would not be strong enough to continue the war, not that she would be so strong that she would take too much after the war was over.

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1 Grey to Carnegie, 16.ix.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O./800/106
2 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 16.xi. 1914, F.O./371/2174/71776
3 Grey to Mallet, 24.ii.1916, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O./800/109

In the days before the Battle of the Marne, there was some thought given to what should be done if the Western Front collapsed completely, and France made peace with Germany. It is a great pity that there is very little documentary evidence to throw a light on what was said. A letter from Churchill to Grey indicates that the question was discussed. Churchill suggested that if France left the war England should carry on. Churchill saw the main danger lying in France handing over her Fleet to Germany. While insisting that this was only a slight possibility, he pointed out that Germany would not have sufficient trained sailors to man the French Fleet, and before they did have the British Fleet could go in and destroy it - Shades of Oran. Britain would then evacuate the Mediterranean and "still have a fighting chance .... concentrating in Home Waters."[1]

Even after the Marne Grey was never optimistic about France's capacity to endure a long war. On December 18, 1914, Bertie found him in a typically despondent mood:

> "Grey did not seem sure of a complete victory, not from want of determination on our part, but on account of French weakness. Imbued evidently with the views of Kitchener he thinks that the war may be a drawn struggle."[2]

In retrospect it would seem a little incongruous that Grey insisted on defeating Germany[3] and sought to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France, and yet he feared France would not be strong enough to continue the war. What Grey had in mind was that the allies would bring Germany to a position where she would offer terms acceptable to the allies. This did not

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1 Churchill to Grey, 7.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
3 Chapter II.

necessarily mean a total victory, but rather a defeat for Germany sufficiently severe that she would meet the minimum aims of the allies. Such an admission of failure would, he felt, be sufficiently damaging to discredit the German military hierarchy and show the German people the folly of their ways.

4. Belgium.

The restoration and compensation of Belgium was the most important of British war aims, and is the easiest to understand. The British Government was absolutely committed to realise this end.

Britain had gone to war in order to safeguard her own interests, but in making the German violation of the neutrality of Belgium a casus belli, and in extracting the last ounce of propaganda value out of Britain's rôle as the defender of international law and Germany's as an international bully, the nation became bound hand and foot to realise the evacuation and indemnity of Belgium. Promises were made to the British public and to the Belgian Government. Grey assured the King of the Belgians:

> "We shall continue to help to the utmost of our power during the war. The example of patriotism set by Belgium has moved us all, and will never be forgotten. We shall strive to secure in (the) terms of peace compensation for what Belgium has suffered."[1]

In all his official and unofficial statements of war aims Grey insisted, as he did in a private letter, written in March, 1915, that:

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1 Grey to Villiers, tel., 21.viii.1914, F.O.371/2164/41420.

> "the irreducible minimum of British conditions is the evacuation and restoration of Belgium, which means at any rate pecuniary compensation to Belgium."[1]

On no occasion, either in public or private, did any member of the Government hold out any hope of a peace in which the German armies did not evacuate Belgium, and the German people did not pay compensation to the Belgians for the disturbance of their lives and the destruction of their property. In an interview given to the Chicago Daily News in the Summer of 1915, Grey did say that if the only outstanding issue was the payment of an indemnity to Belgium, then he would be willing to submit that point to arbitration.[2] As German liability was beyond doubt, this concession was more to political tactics than to Germany.

While Britain was bound to fight on until Germany restored Belgium, she was not unwillingly bound: it was a vital British interest. What was more, as often happens, military action tended to increase the importance of the strategic needs which it served. It produced a psychological and intellectual commitment from which it was almost impossible to escape.

There was one problem which troubled the British Government from the beginning of the war: What was to happen if Germany could not be driven out of Western Europe? It was always envisaged that if this happened,

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1 Grey to Rodd, 6.iii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/65.
2 Memorandum on interview with Mr. Swing of the Chicago Daily News, 6.viii.1915, by Grey, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.

then Germany would have to be bought out at the price of territorial concessions elsewhere. Several schemes were suggested. These proposals were never worked out in detail: partly because the fortunes of war are so hazardous; partly because men will plan in detail for contingencies they welcome, and prefer only to give passing reflection to circumstances that, though possible, they find abhorrent. In August, 1914, it was suggested that, "we want as many German colonies as we can get to use as pawns when negotiating peace terms."[1] At the end of 1914, Churchill pointed out that the deadlock on the Western Front obliged Britain to look for new theatres of war because Germany would use the occupied areas of France and Belgium as a "peace counter".[2] In 1916, when Grey negotiated with House about possible American mediation, it was suggested that if the unwelcome situation arose where the allies would be obliged to appeal to America's good offices, then the price for German withdrawal from Belgium and the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine would be concessions elsewhere, perhaps in Turkey or Africa.[3] This disagreeable possibility was considered by the Foreign Office Committee on war aims. Paget and Tyrrell noted that if one of the allies left the war, then the others might disaffect at an alarming rate. Should this happen Britain would probably be obliged to come to terms with Germany. In this case, German evacuation of Belgium would have to be secured by Britain making territorial concessions to Germany, possibly ceding a part of British East Africa.[4]

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1 Minute by Sperling, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Churchill to Asquith, 29.xii.1914, Asquith Papers, MS.13.
3 House, vol.II, p.291.
4 Foreign Office Memorandum, 7.viii.1916, by Paget and Tyrrell, CAB.29/1/P-5.

5. Germany as a Great Power.

While the British Government sought to ensure that Western Europe was made secure against further German aggression, it did not desire to see Germany removed from the ranks of Great Powers. In his famous 1907 Memorandum, Eyre Crowe had anticipated the issues involved:

> "So long as England remains faithful to the general principle of the preservation of the balance of power, her interests would not be served by Germany being reduced to the rank of a weak Power, as this might easily lead to a Franco-Russian predominance, equally, if not more, formidable to the British Empire."[1]

The balance of power is a confusing term: it is not that it means nothing, but that it has been used in such a variety of senses that it has come to mean many things. Crowe had a pessimistic, or if one prefers skeptical, view of states' international behaviour; he confessed:

> "I never expect foreign governments to act consciously in any way that is not in accordance with their national interests."[2]

For Crowe the balance of power was a mechanistic device to ensure that the powerful did not grow too powerful; it ensured that the relationship between states or groups of states remained in equilibrium. If a balance of power were maintained then no single constellation of forces in Europe could threaten the security of the British Empire.

Grey also had a balance of power doctrine, but its nature was very different. In his memoirs Grey alleged that he never had anything to do

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1 Memorandum by Crowe, 1.i.1907, B.D. III, p.417.
2 Crowe to Paget, 14.x.1916, Paget Papers, add.51256.

with the idea of the balance of power:

> "I have never, so far as I recollect, used the phrase the 'Balance of Power'. I have often deliberately avoided the use of it, and I have never consciously set it before me as something to be pursued, attained and preserved."[1]

This was categorical enough, but it was not quite honest. Grey, writing at a time when the so-called "old diplomacy" was discredited, was eager to show himself in a flattering light. The very phrase the balance of power smacked of pre-war cynicism, and of the policy of encircling Germany of which he had been accused. It is true that Grey disliked using diplomatic shorthand: he spoke of understandings rather than ententes, improved relations rather than detentes. However, beneath different words lay similar ideas and concepts.

In 1907, Grey had observed:

> "The Germans do not realise that England has always drifted or deliberately gone into opposition to any Power which establishes hegemony in Europe."[2]

Again, in 1911, he told the Committee of Imperial Defence that there was:

> "No appreciable danger of our being involved in any considerable trouble in Europe, unless there is some Power, or group of Powers, in Europe which has the ambition of achieving what I would call the Napoleonic policy."[3]

These sentiments clearly constitute some sort of balance of power doctrine.

To understand Grey's ideas they have to be viewed as an outgrowth of his political philosophy. What was his political philosophy? The

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1 Grey, vol.I, p.5.
2 Quoted in Monger, p.300.
3 B.D. VI, p.785.

radical wing of the Liberal Party had always looked on the balance of power as a sinister idea: "an evil fetish" of men who had no interest in the betterment of mankind, and who placed the narrow vanities of individual nations above the manifold blessings of international comity. It is not there that we are to find the basis of Grey's ideas. We must turn again to Lord Acton. Acton did not see the balance of power as being something wicked, he felt that it was a noble political ideal. Writing on the War of the Spanish Succession, he had observed:

> "In one of his last conversations William (III) had said: 'we seek nothing but the security which comes from the balance of power.' Our policy was not maintained throughout on that exalted level."[1]

Why should Acton, a devout though eccentric Liberal, and a friend of Gladstone, have so praised that concept of a balance of power? The answer lies in Acton's concept of power; a concept which Grey shared. Acton saw power as a spiritual force, it was the lust for domination.

> "This law of the modern world, that power tends to expand indefinitely and will transcend all barriers, abroad and at home, until met by superior forces produces the rhythmic movement in history."[2]

From such a concept other ideas followed: the dictatorial state was by nature aggressive because it was the embodiment of the craving for power of a few men. This desire for universal domination would inevitably, according to Acton, spill over national frontiers. It could be contained in two ways: ideally by constitutional restraints at home, but if dictatorships were established, then by a coalition of opposing forces on the international level. The balance of power was a rule of law in a society without law.

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1 Acton, p.244.
2 Acton, p.60.

In Twenty Five Years Grey hinted that his attitude towards the balance of power was very similar to Acton's. He pointed out that in the eighteen-eighties and eighteen-nineties Britain had been on more cordial terms with the Triple Alliance, the more powerful of the European power blocs. He reflected that this seemed to indicate that British policy was not devoted to the idea of a balance of power. He interpreted this curiosity thus:

> "there was, I think, a belief that the power of the Triple Alliance made for stability and therefore peace in Europe; that France and Russia, though military the weaker, were restless Powers, while the Triple Alliance was on the whole contented. The conclusion I would draw is that Great Britain has not in theory been adverse to the predominance of a strong group in Europe when it seemed to make for stability and peace. To support such a combination has generally been her first choice; it is only when a dominant Power becomes aggressive and she feels her own interests threatened that she, by instinct of self-defence, if not by deliberate policy, gravitates to anything that can fairly be described as a Balance of Power."[1]

It was typical of Grey (perhaps because of a lack of self-confidence) to indicate his line of reasoning in rather indirect way, such as an intellectual digression. This is just what he did in this case. His statements when in office, two of which have been quoted, read almost the same as this section of his memoirs.

What was dangerous about Germany was not her physical size, or her army, or her navy, or even her economic strength, it was her desire for a commanding position in Europe. This lust for domination was, Grey felt, the creed of the military oligarchy - The Prussian Military Caste - who ruled Germany. Thus, providing German society was purged of these

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1 Grey, vol.I, p.8.

pernicious elements, there was no need to destroy Germany's position as a Great Power.

Most sections of the British Government agreed with Grey that there was no need to drastically curb German power in Europe, providing that she abandoned her aggressive tendencies. Indeed, in certain cases they were prepared to accept a stronger Germany if this meant a less aggressive one. The issues emerge quite clearly in memoranda on war aims drawn up towards the end of 1916. The case in point was whether ~~it~~ the Austria proper was to be incorporated into the German Empire in the event of Austria-Hungary breaking up. For the Foreign Office, Paget and Tyrrell wrote:

> "It (Germany) will receive, it is true, the Austrian population, but this accession will add to the importance and influence of non-Prussian states of the German Empire. Moreover it will mean a considerable increase in the Catholic elements in Germany, and everything tending to decrease Prussian power will naturally lead in the direction of a more permanent settlement in Europe, as it will diminish the aggressive tendencies of the Central European Empires through a weakening of Prussia."[1]

Arthur Balfour, always one to play on subtleties that he hoped everyone else had overlooked, considered:

> "Apparently such a change would create a great German speaking state more formidable than Germany before the war; and this might be, in fact, what would happen. On the other hand, it must be remembered that this would probably modify the position of Prussia ..... the change might in its ultimate effect be a defeat for German militarism."[2]

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1 Foreign Office Memorandum, 7.vii.1916, by Paget and Tyrrell, CAB.29/1/P-5.
2 Memorandum by Balfour, 4.x.1916, CAB.29/1/P-7.

Balfour, whose great joy in life was to avoid stating anything approaching the obvious, must have been irritated with himself to find that the military mind of General Robertson could make the same point:

> "it might be advantageous if Austria proper were incorporated into that Empire (the German), more especially thereby 10 million South Germans would be brought in as a counterpoise to Prussia."[1]

In the early part of the war British attitudes towards Austria-Hungary had not yet come this far, but the underlying principle that what needed to be curbed was not German power but her aggressive habits was already firmly established.

There were, furthermore, very good reasons for maintaining Germany as a Great Power. It seemed very likely that the war would bring a vast expansion in Russian power, and it was felt that Germany was needed as a bulwark against Russia. The Russophile Sir Arthur Nicolson complained:

> "there are many people - some in responsible positions - who think that before many years have elapsed we shall have to join Germany for resisting the predominant power of Russia."[2]

The centre of anti-Russian feeling was the Paris Embassy. Bertie[3] was almost as obsessively anti-Russian as Nicolson was pro-Russian. But Nicolson's aside, about men "in responsible positions", was probably a reference to Tyrrell, who enjoyed cordial relations with Bertie[4] and who was in the habit of drawing Grey's attention to anti-Russian reports.[5]

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1 General Staff Memorandum, 31.viii.1916, by Robertson, CAB.29/1/P-4.
2 Nicolson to Buchanan, 15.iii.1915, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/377.
3 Bertie to Grey, 25.vii.1914, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177; Bertie to Grey, 14.ii.1915, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177.
4 See Chapter I and Chapter II.
5 Grahame to Tyrrell, 23.ix.1914, and minute by Tyrrell, undated, c.25.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/56A. See also Chapter V.

This, no doubt, infuriated Nicolson.

The Military was similarly disposed to maintain Germany as a Great Power. Kitchener[1] and Robertson[2] emphasised the need for a strong Germany in order to maintain an equilibrium between the European Powers. Soldiers of that generation were influenced by social Darwinist ideas; they tended to look upon ~~war~~ peace as a breathing space in which nations made themselves fit for the next round of international combat. In a memorandum for the Cabinet, written in April, 1915, Kitchener lampooned any idea that a permanent peace would follow the war, and went on, in almost paranoid fashion, to examine every conceivable permutation of international conspiracy that the British Empire was likely to face.[3] Given such a mentality it was only natural to want a strong Germany as a counterpoise to Russia.

Grey and Asquith were well aware of the arguments in favour of maintaining Germany as a strong Power, and as a check on the ascendency of Russia. Such sentiments may well have influenced them in their desire to preserve Germany as a Great Power. But they reasoned the problem quite differently. They saw no need to impose harsh terms on Germany providing that militarism was overthrown and she became a democratic state. The Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister were by temperament and conviction men who believed in the virtues of moderation - at least in public life. They were schooled in a nineteenth century tradition of compromise, and distrusted sudden and sweeping change. As politicians, and Liberals at

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1 Future Relations of the Great Powers, 21.iv.1915, by Kitchener, CAB.127/34.
2 General Staff Memorandum, 31.viii.1916, by Robertson, CAB.29/1/P-4.
3 Futube Relations of the Great Powers, 21.iv.1915, by Kitchener, CAB.127/34.

that, they believed that any policy of crushing Germany would be immoral and difficult to enforce. It would have required a permanent occupation of Germany and a perpetuation of the abnormal conditions of war. A Carthaginian Peace was alien to the framework of their ideas.

The notable exception to the general feeling that Germany ought to be maintained as a strong European Power was Sir Arthur Nicolson. The question of Nicolson's war aims has already been considered in Harold Nicolson's biography.[1] This author is loath to controvert any part of a study which is, even now, the best record of British foreign policy in the period immediately before the First World War, and is an object lesson to all writers of memoirs on how a well-placed, intelligent and sensitive contemporary can be of infinite value to the historian. However, the evidence is overwhelming that Harold Nicolson, no doubt moved by the very highest motives of filial affection and loyalty, made his father's war aims appear considerably more moderate than they were.

Nicolson's thought was profoundly influenced by social Darwinist ideas. His son wrote of him:

> "He adopted ..... the mental habits of his generation, - and among other fallacies, he imagined that virility was among the highest aims of human endeavour."[2]

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1 H. Nicolson, pp.432-433: Harold Nicolson draws his evidence from the second part of the war when military victory no longer seemed possible.

2 H. Nicolson, p.x.

His correspondence is filled with phrases about nations "fighting for their lives", and "struggling for their existence as Great Powers". Whatever were the immediate reasons for the war, Nicolson felt that it had primordial causes; it was the inevitable day of reckoning when states fought for supremacy and survival. Nicolson took his social Darwinist ideas to their natural conclusion: Britain and Germany were two great national organisms locked in a death struggle in which one would surely perish. When Germany was defeated she would have to pay the full price for her misbehaviour. Shortly after the outbreak of war he explained his views to the Bulgarian Minister in London, and reported what he had said to Grey:

> "I told him .... we all intended to prosecute the war till we had rendered Germany harmless for at least two generations - there can be no possible doubt that this war must end in the defeat of Germany though she might score some limited success here or there. After this terrible war we should all require peace and tranquillity and the only way of ensuring these blessings was to defeat completely the disturber of the peace - Germany would lose all her colonies, her fleet and be reduced to a state of impoverishment - but it was she who had raised the wind and she must bear the consequences - (I thought it just as well to beat the big drum a little though personally I firmly believe in all I said)."[1]

The Permanent Under Secretary saw no reason to maintain Germany as a counterpoise to Russia, and was quite willing to allow France and Russia to destroy her:

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 24.viii.1914. F.O.371/1900/42998.

"Though there is every likelihood that Russia will emerge from this war immensly stronger than she was before, she will not be the same great menace like German militarism. The Russian character and the German character, Russian policy and German policy and aims are very different matters. It depresses me to hear as I have heard from some circles, which should be better informed, that in some years we shall be fighting Russia to preserve the balance of power. You (Buchanan) know as well as I do the baselessness of such apprehensions."[1]

Nicolson wanted the post-war world to be run by an Anglo-French-Russian alliance; the three Powers would settle all questions between themselves.[2] Such ideas found little favour with either Nicolson's colleagues or with Grey.

6. The German Fleet.

It can be observed that British war aims were not entirely consistent. On the general question of Germany's position in Europe, Grey was prepared to believe that the discrediting of militarism would be an adequate guarantee against German misbehaviour in the future. Where British interests were directly engaged solid physical checks to German aggression were demanded. This paradox was in part the consequence of a desire to be doubly sure where Britain's own national interests were at stake; in part it was the result of the fact that Grey did not know how complete victory would be, and to what extent Germany would be willing to take a responsible position in the society of nations. In no case was this paradoxical reasoning more obvious and blatant than over the question of German naval power. Britain was prepared to leave Germany a strong power on land, and even to contend that it was to the general good that this should be so, but on no account was

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1 Nicolson to Buchanan, 8.1.1915, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O./800/377
2 Nicolson correspondence with Buchanan, Carnock Papers, F.O./800/375-381

she prepared to leave Germany as a great sea Power. It would appear that this aim emerged quite spontaneously as soon as the war broke out.[1]

When the Liberal Cabinet and their advisers looked back on the events leading up to war, they felt that the German military party had for many years planned to impose their hegemony on Europe and to overthrow Britain's world Empire. The construction of Germany's battlefleet, under the inspiration of the arch-Prussian Tirpitz,[2] was seen as the centre-piece of Germany's challenge to British security. It had involved Britain in an expensive naval race, and had taxed the nerves of the Government and the nation. Introducing his first War Budget, Lloyd George proclaimed:

> "I should regard the War as having failed in one of its chief purposes unless it led to an all-round reduction in the inflated cost of armaments."[3]

The Admiralty and the Foreign Office were determined that Britain should not be troubled by German naval power after the war, and insisted that the only permanent and satisfactory solution for the problem of German sea power and the cost of armaments was the destruction of the German Fleet. A Foreign Office memorandum, written early in 1917, put the point with a crude but disarming simplicity:

> "The fact is we cannot allow other nations to share our supremacy at sea: our geographical position alone obliges us to claim this monopoly."[4]

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1. Minute by Churchill, 22.viii.1914, F.O.371/2173/42141
2. For the Cabinet's view of Tirpitz's part in the events July, 1914, Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 3.viii.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901-quoted in Chapter II.
3. 17.ix.1914, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Fifth series, LXVIII, column 355.
4. Foreign Office Memorandum, 21.i.1917, by Mallet, Tyrrell and Clerk, CAB.16/36/TC/27.

The First Lord of the Admiralty told the War Council that the destruction of the German Fleet and the removal of the Kiel Canal from German control were the "great objects of British policy".[1] Churchill was warmly seconded by Fisher,[2] who added in characteristic style, that "if after the war Germany should build a new Fleet, we ought to go in and smash it." Hankey, the Secretary to the C.I.D., and himself an officer in the Marines, was of the opinion that Britain:

> "could not accept any scheme (of collective security) which did not give us a very great preponderance of naval force, and unless Germany is completely beaten to her knees, she would not agree to any scheme consistent with our national security."[3]

The precise manner in which the reduction of German sea power was to be effectuated was not decided. In the early stages of the war, when a great naval Armageddon was still anticipated, it would doubtless have been premature to have prepared any definite scheme.

Quite a lot of thought was given to what was to be done with a permanent fixture of German naval power, the Kiel Canal. The Canal, connecting the North Sea with the Baltic, allowed Germany to move her Fleet from one to the other. One school of thought favoured a neutralisation of the Canal, accompanied by a transfer of Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark. This scheme was proposed by both Churchill[4] and Balfour when they were First Lord of the Admiralty. Balfour[5] suggested

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1 War Council Minutes, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
2 War Council Minutes, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
3 Committee of Imperial Defence Memorandum on Freedom of the Seas, 7.vi.1915, by Hankey, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.
4 War Council Minutes, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
5 Memorandum by Balfour, 4.x.1916, CAB.29/1/P-7.

that Denmark should be made secure against a German revanche by a guarantee of her sovereignty. Realising that many of his Cabinet colleagues were abysmally ignorant of European geography, he saw fit to explain:

> "I ought, paranthetically to add that unfortunately the region through which the Kiel Canal passes is German in bothllanguage and sentiment."

The Foreign Office Committee on war aims thought up a much more ingenious scheme. Ralph Paget, who sat on the committee, wrote:

> "I suggest it being blown up instead of 'filled in'. It would be quicker and cheaper and just as effective... the Kiel Canal and Schleswig-Holstein were considered (by the Committee). We were at first of the opinion that possibly the Canal might be made into a commercial waterway with a neutral zone on either side of it guaranteed by all the Powers. But we shortly determined that this would be inexpedient and would probably lead to trouble of some kind, it would be difficult to guarantee against attack and would never pay commercially. We therefore came to the conclusion that it should be blown up."

The Committee suggested destroying the Kiel Canal rather than transferring Schleswig Holstein to Denmark because:

> "We worked all though, as far as possible, on the principle of nationalities. We recommend Schleswig should be given to Denmark while Holstein remained German. I do not think the Danes themselves could care for the former in as much as their one sentiment seems to be blue funk of the Germans."[1]

It is sad that the naval experts at the Admiralty have left us no statistics as to the relative merits of "filling in" and "blowing up" the

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1 Paget to Findlay, 2.x.1916, (copy), Paget Papers, add.51256.

Kiel Canal, and went no further than suggesting that it should be "internationalised" or "closed".[1]

Unfortunately, Grey and Asquith do not seem to have set down their views on the German navy and the Kiel Canal. There is, however, strong circumstantial evidence to indicate that they went along with the views of the experts at the Foreign Office and the Admiralty. Both men stood on the imperialist wing of the Liberal Party and attached great importance to British naval supremacy. In a review of foreign policy, Grey had once explained, "the maintenance of Sea Power .... is the underlying motive of our policy in Europe."[2] The Foreign Secretary[3] and the Prime Minister[4] were in the habit of taking the advice of the Service Departments without question. In this case, the consensus of professional opinion was so overwhelming that it is very hard to believe that they did not go along with it.

7. Conclusion.

Britain was a satisfied Power; she desired to be left alone to enjoy the benefits of her vast Empire, her overseas trade and investments, and the accumulated wealth of decades of prosperity. She fought, above all, for security. It was to ensure the safety of the British Isles that the decision had been made to go to war. In the terms of peace the Government sought to institutionalise this desire for security into the post-war settlement. The evacuation of Belgium, the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine and the reduction of German naval power were to safeguard Britain and Western Europe from a German attack in the future.

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1 Admiralty Memorandum, 12.x.1916, by Jackson, CAB.29/1/P-8.
2 B.D. VI, p.734.
3 Percy, Viscount of Newcastle, More Memoirs, (1958), p.43.
4 See Jenkins biography for Asquith's style of conducting business.

In the early part of war, it was hoped to return to the halcyon days of the nineteenth century; the war was to be used to modify those aspects of the pre-war world that had been a source of danger and anxiety. Just as the destruction of Prussian militarism was an attempt to redress the evils revealed in the Sarajevo crisis, so war aims in regard to western Europe were to redress the ills of August, 1914, and to re-establish unrivalled naval supremacy.

It would be idle to blame the British Government for pursuing narrow national interests. It is true that the events of July and August, 1914, demonstrated that the excessive emphasis on national advancement could be a calamity for civilisation. On the other hand, it must be remembered that men looked back on a century of nearly unbroken peace; an era in which the European Powers had co-existed with remarkable efficiency. In that century the vast mass of mankind had benefited, albeit sometimes slowly and unevenly, by association with the nation state. The loyalty and affection with which an enormous majority of men served their states in the war of 1914-1918 is in itself a vindication of the pursuit of national interests by their leaders. But the way in which those interests were interpreted is open to question.

If there was one thing that the war should have made obvious it was that the question of security had ceased to be solely a matter of prudent military and strategic preparations. It could only be attained by promoting harmony in international society. The advances in technology and the decline in Britain's relative power were irreversible trends, and the Government should have

been far-sighted enough to see that the sort of security they sought was no longer possible.

Britain's destiny had become intimately bound up with the future stability of Europe, and yet British statesmen and their advisers sought only to drive Germany out of Britain's backyard and to trust that European problems would work themselves out. This was not only selfish, it was also silly and unimaginative. In Central and Eastern Europe, where Britain had few interests directly engaged, statesmen were unconcerned about the precise terms of the settlement, and policy evolved as the child of expediency. It is to this area that we must now turn.

CHAPTER IV
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

I. Introduction

British policy towards Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans has already been the subject of some study. The most significant of these works is Dr. Hanak's admirable monograph, Great Britain and Austria-Hungary during the First World War.[1] Hanak's volume is largely concerned with the development of public opinion, and does not dwell on official policy. This chapter in no way tries to controvert Dr. Hanak's conclusions, rather it examines a different aspect of the same problem. Other studies have tried to demonstrate that British policy was directed towards the maintenance of the balance of power. W.W. Gottlieb,[2] in his scholarly examination of secret diplomacy during the First World War, went so far as to suggest:

> "If the Dual Monarchy did not exist, it would (to adapt a famous saying) have had to be invented by Whitehall as a counterpoise to Germany and Russia."

The archives do not indicate that this judgement is valid, and it is more than doubtful if Grey ever pursued this type of balance of power policy.[3]

British policy towards the settlement in Eastern and Central Europe

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1. Hanak, H., Britain and Austria-Hungary during the First World War, (1962)
2. Gottlieb, p.201: in the same vein, see Smith, C.J. Great Britain and the 1914-1915 Straits Agreement with Russia: The Promises of November 1914, A.H.R.CXXX.No.4.
3. see Chapter III.

developed on an ad hoc basis. As Britain had few interests directly engaged in that region, policy was flexible. Indeed, the whole future of the Habsburg Empire was used as a pawn to serve Britain's immediate needs. The principle of British policy was that there was no principle or grand design.

Up to the beginning of December, 1914, the British Government were prepared to believe that the war could be brought to a decisive conclusion. They were willing therefore to make concessions to allies and possible allies in order to bring about an early victory. By November, 1914, the larger part of the Habsburg dominions had been earmarked for distribution in the settlement. After December, 1914, Grey became increasingly doubtful as to whether the war could be won, and looked for a negotiated peace with Austria - Hungary.

2. Attitudes Towards Austria - Hungary.

It would be quite wrong to try to establish attitudes towards Austria-Hungary upon the basis of those who favoured preserving the Habsburg Empire and those who favoured national self-determination. The dominating sentiment was neither sympathy for the Habsburg Empire nor sympathy for those who sought to overthrow it, it was support for British interests. Nearly all those who had any influence on the development of policy were prepared to retain or destroy Austria, depending on whether either course seemed to secure Britain's immediate interests. It is only within this framework that it is useful to notice of shades of opinion.

From the very beginning of the war there was within the Foreign Office

a large body of opinion that would have liked to have seen the map of Europe re-organized according to nationality. The most significant members of this group were Sir Arthur Nicolson[1], George Russell Clerk,[2] Max Müller[3] and Lord Eustace Percy[4]. They were less certain as to what constituted nationality. Clerk wrote:

> "language is not always a safe guide to nationality: Cavour was an Italian, if ever there was one, yet he wrote his speeches in French andhhad to have them translated into Italian before he delivered them."[5]

They only dimly perceived that the re-distribution of territory on national lines would in itself raise difficulties, and for the most part remained confident that respect for the nationality principle - whatever particular construction was put on that term - would make for international stability and peace.

While these men had contact with Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed,[6] they never saw the nationality principle as a cardinal tenet of British foreign policy. Clerk put the matter with a nice precision:

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1 A. Nicolson to Buchanan, 8.i.1915, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O./800/377; Seton-Watson to Arthur Miller, 12.vi.1915, published in J.M.H. XXX,1.

2 Minute by Clerk, 7.xi.1914, F.O./371/1900/67456; Minute by Clerk, 17.i.1915, F.O./371/2505/6149; Minutes by Clerk in F.O./371/2507.

3 Memorandum by Müller, 18.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/95.

4 Memorandum by Percy, 2.v.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/95.

5 Minutes by Clerk, [illegible] F.O./371/2507/[illegible].

6 Chapter 1.

> "The answer, if one ever has to be given, is that we cannot strain the principle of nationalities to the point of riskigg success in the war."[1]

In the Cabinet Churchill was alone in favouring the destruction of Austria-Hungary as a point of policy. The First Lord of the Admiralty was the only member of the Cabinet who blamed Austria as much as Germany for the war.[2] He desired to bring the Balkan States and Italy into the war, and to serve this end was prepared to put the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires up for auction. In sending the Buxtons to the Balkans, he instructed them to spread the word that, "Austria will be resolved into her component parts".[3] In September, 1914, he gave an interview to an Italian newspaper, and expressed the view that:

> "We desire that this war should re-arrange the map of Europe according to the principle of nationality, according to the true wishes of the peoples that live in the territories that have been so long disputed."[4]

Churchill believed in his own propaganda. Like most men who feel that they have their finger on the pulse of history, he was intent on hurrying it along. The fall of multinational states was at once inevitable and consistent with British interests. In January, 1915, he wrote to Kitchener:

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1 Minute by Clerk, 31.iii.1915, F.O./371/2376/37639.

2 Minute by Churchill, 5.viii.1914, F.O./371/2167/36211.

3 Churchill, vol.I, pp.486-7, Chapter I.

4 Giornole d'Italia, 22.ix.1914.

"Also I think the case for settling generally on ethnographical principles is a strong one and a hard rule for Austria and Germany."[1]

The Foreign Secretary refused to deduce his policy from any such rigid principles. Temperamentally Grey had something of the "old fashioned Whig" about him, he distrusted abstract principles and put his faith in goodwill, common sense and pragmatism. He was neither for nor against the principle of nationality. He was capable of saying "we have no animus against Austria",[2] and, equally, that he would not attempt to save her.[3] He saw stability and security in terms of norms of behaviour and respect for law and conventional morality. Grey, having never himself succeeded in sublimating his own introversion, found it difficult to understand that other men could be deeply moved by sentiments like nationalism. He saw that Britain had few interests directly engaged in that area, and no military power to determine its destiny. His reluctance to commit Britain to any firm policy was further increased by his own ignorance about the political and national issues of Austria-Hungary. He was singularly ill-equipped with detailed knowledge and was acutely aware of the fact. One of the most revealing records of Grey's attitude towards the settlement in Eastern and Central Europe is a minute he wrote during the Italian negotiations of March, 1915:

"I should like to look at the map of the Adriatic Coast..... Mr. Clerk can explain to me on the map."[4]

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1 Churchill to Kitchener, 21.i.1915, Robertson Papers, 1/13/3.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/166.

3 Imperiali to Di Sanguiliano, 16.ix.1914, D.D.I. (5th Series) I, 700.

4 Minute by Grey, undated, c.17.iii.1915, F.O./371/2507/31554.

When it is remembered that Grey had been concerned with foreign affairs for nearly a quarter of a century, that for ten of those years he had been Foreign Secretary, and during the London Conferences of Ambassadors he had been intimately concerned with the distribution of territory in the Balkans, it can be taken that lack of knowledge was really absence of enthusiasm and interest. After seeing Grey, Seton-Watson came away with an impression of having spoken to:

> "an entirely well-meaning man, who has been well grounded by some teacher in a subject in which he is not really at home!" (The South Slav question,"[1]

Grey's attitudes were typical of those of his colleagues in the Cabinet. When Asquith declared:

> "we are fighting to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering Power,"[2]

he was thinking of states in a legal sense and not nations in a spiritual one.

3. The Background to British policy towards Austria-Hungary.

The break-up of Austria-Hungary had long been anticipated. In a world in which nationality had appeared as the key to statehood, the Dual Monarchy stood as an anachronism. The triumph of the Balkan States in their struggle with Turkey in the Balkan Wars seemed an ominous dress-rehearsal for the fate of the Habsburg Empire, and it was universally felt

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1 Memorandum by R.W.Seton-Watson, 4.V.1915: a typescript was kindly shown to me by Professor H. Seton-Watson.

2 6.viii.1914, Parliamentary Debates, Commons Fifth Series, LXV, column 2079.

that the days of that Empire were numbered.

After the Balkan Wars there was an almost continuous buzz of speculation about the future of the Dual Monarchy. Shortly before the murders at Sarajevo, Sir Arthur Nicolson wrote:

> "before long the disintegrating forces in the Dual Monarchy may become seriously operative..... Austria may not exist for any appreciable length of time as a coherent country."[1]

The Foreign Secretary had come to a not dissimilar conclusion, Austria was "a star that may dissolve."[2]

From 1912 onwards, the relations between Austria and the Balkan States were highly unstable. In itself this was of no moment to British interests, but it brought with it two dangers: an attempt by Austria, or the Balkan States backed by Russia, to assert their international position could spark off a general European conflagration; Germany and Russia might come together and make a huge deal over the future of Austria-Hungary and the Balkans.[3] It was feared that such a Russo-German rapprochement could only react unfavourably on Britain's international position.[4]

Grey approached the problem pragmatically. He saw no immediate danger of a Russo-German agreement, and had no desire to involve Britain in disputes in which she had no interests directly engaged. He hoped that by

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1 Nicolson to Hardinge, 11.vi.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O./800/374.

2 Minute by Grey, undated, c.1.xii.1913, B.D.X(i), 316.

3 Minute by Clerk, 6.iv.1914, F.O./371/2092/15087.

4 Nicolson correspondence with Buchanan, Carnock Papers, F.O./800/374-375.

working with Germany he would be able to keep any difficulty within reasonable limits. This policy had been successful during the Balkan Wars and, as we have seen, it was the basis of Grey's policy during the Sarajevo crisis.[1]

In July, 1914, Grey centred his policy on Berlin, and left it to Germany to restrain her ally. Professor Temperley, who later interviewed Grey, recorded:

> "His policy was to try to get Germany to put pressure on Austria. He had been criticised for not approaching Austria - direct. But he thought that if Germany - an ally - could not put pressure on Austria - he would be unable to."[2]

As Grey assured the Germans that he would follow the same policy as he had done during the Balkan Wars,[3] they would quite rightly have been indignant had he then gone behind their backs to Vienna. The more so since Britain had no interests directly engaged in the Austro-Serb dispute.

Grey refused to involve Britain in the original dispute between Austria and Serbia,[4] and absolutely declined to consider going to war so long as the conflict was solely one between Austria, on the one hand, and Serbia and Russia, on the other.[5]

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1 Chapter 2.

2 Professor H. Temperley's record of an interview with Grey, Spender Papers, add. 56386.

3 Grey to Rumbold, 9.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 41.

4 Grey to De Bunsen,tel.24.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 91.

5 Churchill to Grey, 22.vii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88
Grey to Buchanan, tel.25.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 112.

Once Britain was at war with Germany, a declaration of war against Austria-Hungary was inevitable. The Western Democracies could not fight against Germany and with Russia, and not against Austria. As soon as the Adriatic had been made secure, and the French armies shipped safely from North Africa, Britain and France declared war on the Habsburg Empire.[1]

4. Poland.

On 16th August, 1914, it was declared by proclamation of the Russian Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicholas, that after the war there would be an autonomous Poland. It was to comprise of the Kingdom of Poland (the Napoleonic construction), the western and Polish districts of Galicia and a large part of the area around Posen (Poznan). There was to be full freedom of language and religion and the country was to be ruled by a Lieutenant of the Czar.[2]

Somewhat naturally, some sections of opinion in England were suspicious of Russia's real intentions. Lord Cromer feared a great increase in Russian power, and pointed to the fact that it would "enormously weaken the power of Germany on that side."[3] Even the author of Eminent Victorians, (always one for spotting hidden motives), managed to drag his mind from loftier thoughts to reflect unfavourably upon the expansion of Tsarist autocracy.[4]

No such apprehensions existed in the Foreign Office. Sir Eyre Crowe, the high priest of realpolitik and the balance of power, greeted the proclamation with enthusiasm:

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1 F.O./371/2167/36211; F.O./371/2167/37761; F.O./371/2167/37762.
2 Buchanan to Grey, tel.14.viii.1914, F.O./371/2095/39209.
3 Cromer to Lady Alice Shaw Stewart, 20.viii.1914, (copy), Cromer Papers, F.O./633/23.
4 Holroyd. Vol.II, p.119.

> "I consider the Russian proclamation a statesmanlike move in the right direction."[1]

This reaction was hardly surprising. The German armies, as German armies will do, was pouring through Belgium and Northern France; the Russian Army was urgently needed to engage Germany in the east. At a moment when there were rumours that Russia was holding back troops for a war against Turkey,[2] the proclamation was taken as a healthy indication of Russian intentions. The war was entering a critical phase, and at such times promises are at a discount. Anything that Russia did to win friends to the side of the Entente would serve British ends. It was hoped that the proclamation would win over the Poles.

Russian autocracy was always an embarrassment to Britain, and her promises of a liberal settlement, suspect as they were, made her aims more consonant with the avowed purposes of the Western Democracies. Since an autonomous Poland could only be established by Russian force of arms, and if Russia were victorious any settlement could be imposed by her, the Russian plan was seen as a hopeful sign of a liberalising of Russian policy. Grey approved of the Russian proclamation, and let it be known that:

> "His Majesty's Government are in thorough sympathy with the Russian Manifesto and it was welcomed cordially by public opinion here."[3]

Here matters stopped. There was no question of underwriting any Russian promises. Britain had no interests directly engaged, and there was no

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1 Minute by Crowe, 15.viii.1914, F.O./371/2095/39209.

2 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 13.viii.1914, F.O./371/2171/38794.

3 Minute by Grey, undated, c.1.ix.1914, and Clerk to Retinger, 4.ix.1914, (copy), F.O./371/2095/46074, Minute by Tyrrell, undated, c.8.ix.1914 F.O./371/2095/47287.

wish to incur binding obligations in Eastern Europe. Clerk advised: "We cannot guarantee Russian promises."[1] Nicolson saw it might be insulting to Russia if Britain intervened, and suggested; "Let each settle his own affairs."[2]

Britain tacitly agreed to Russian proposals without making any promise to realize them.

5. Roumania.

In early August, 1914, Russia began negotiations with a view to bringing Roumania into the war on the side of the Triple Entente.[3] Benckendorff urged Grey to ease Russia's task by guaranteeing Roumanian integrity after the war. The Foreign Secretary refused to be drawn, and told the Russian Ambassador of the:

> "impossibility of our undertaking to go to war in future years on behalf of the integrity of Roumania."[4]

The limit of British involvement would be a diplomatic support at Bucharest.

Sazanow pressed on with his Roumanian negotiations, and in early October, 1914, a Russo-Roumanian agreement was concluded whereby in return for a Roumanian undertaking that she remain neutral, Russia undertook not to oppose Roumanian claims for the Roumanian areas of Hungary at the end

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1 Minute by Clerk, 20,viii,1914, F.O./371/2095/40933.

2 Minute by Nicolson, undated, c.20.viii.1914, F.O./371/2095/40933.

3 Torrey, Glenn A., Roumania and the Belligerents, J.C.H.I.3.

4 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 8.viii.1914, F.O./371/2164/38078.

of the war. Britain took no part in the negotiation of this agreement, and it was - either by accident or design - misrepresented. The Foreign Secretary believed that Russia had promised Roumanian Transylvania to Roumania, and she was pledged to realise Roumanian ambitions. Grey gave his support to the Russo-Roumanian agreement, but would not offer any material assistance in helping Roumania to wrest territory from Hungary:

> "Any guarantee of action after this war is over is limited to diplomatic support."[1]

At the time it was concluded the Russo-Roumanian agreement received little attention. Later it was to be of some significance, and Grey's misunderstanding of the nature of Russian obligation was to influence his policy towards Austria-Hungary.

In the matter of Roumanian ambitions, as over the question of Poland, Britain fell in with Russian policy, but declined to commit herself to more than diplomatic support.

6. Bosnia and Hercegovina.

The status of these provinces had, of course, been central to the immediate origins of the war.

The Serbian government had long coveted Bosnia and Hercegovina. Delinquent "students" across the Austrian frontier, fired by irredentist ideals, and armed, then as now, with doctrines of direct action, raised a foul cult of assassination to the very touchstone of manhood.[2] They

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1 F.O./371/2163/37466.

2 Dedijer, V., The Road to Sarajevo, (1966), pp.235-260.

succeeded in precipitating a conflict between Serbia and Austria, in which a reluctant Serbia had an opportunity to realise her ambitions.

Grey had no love for Serbia, and had been distressed to think that a nation of compulsive regicides could start a general European war.[1] The whole shabby atmosphere of Balkan politics and diplomacy was repugnant to him. After a spell at the Foreign Office in June and July, 1915, during which the British Government had been trying to buy the Bulgarians into war with the offer of "douceurs" of 2½ million pounds in personal bribes,[2] Lord Crewe, a man of more worldly experience than Grey, wrote:

> "I own up that I shall give up responsibility for the Balkan negotiations without a tear; as after interviewing the various people involved, and communicating forwards and backwards with our excellent Allies, one feels as might a well-meaning croupier in a particularly low tripot."[3]

While Britain and France had no interest in seeing the realization of Serbian ambitions, it was inevitable that Austria would have to make territorial concessions to her. Serbia had in Russia a powerful patron, and the Pan-Slav hysteria which gripped Russian opinion in 1914 made Serbian claims irresistible. The future of Bosnia and Hercegovina was as important for Russia as was the restoration of Belgium for Britain. On 12 September, 1914, Sazanow treated Buchanan to his views on the terms of

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1 Grey to Rumbold, 20.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 68.

2 Drummond to Bax-Ironside, tel. 25.vi.1915, and Crewe to Bax-Ironside, tel. 30.vi.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/43.

3 Crewe to Bertie, 1.vi.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O./800/58.

peace. One square in his grand design was the acquisition by Serbia of Bosnia and Hercegovina together with a part of Dalmation Coast giving access to the sea.[1] The Czar told the French Ambassador that Austria-Hungary would be broken up and Serbia would receive "compensation".[2]

The Foreign Office accepted that Serbia would be enlarged at the expense of the Habsburg Empire. Grey envisaged the establishment of "one great Slav state in which Serbia and Montenegro are merged."[3]

7. Italian Claims.

As soon as it was realized that Italy would not join Austria and Germany, the Russians began negotiations to bring Italy into the war on the side of the Triple Entente. Grey felt that Sazanow was being premature, and saw no point in pressing Italy too hard before she was either militarily or psychologically prepared to turn against her former allies.[4] He did, however, make it clear that if Italy joined the war then she could expect compensation at the expense of Austria. When Cambon informed Nicolson of Russo-Italian talks at St. Petersburg, and that France was willing to offer Italy the Trent valley, Grey approved and proposed that the offer be raised. Showing a timely,and not altogether uncharacteristic, largesse with the territory of Empire with which Britain was not yet at war, he noted:

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1 Buchanan to Nicolson, 13.ix.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O./800/375.

2 F.O./371/2174/71999.

3 Grey to Buchanan, tel 27.iii.1915, F.O./371/2507/35979. Was Grey thinking of a Yugoslav state, or was he thinking of a huge Russian dominated Slav monolith? In either case it was to include Bosnia and Hercegovina; Benckendorff to Sazanow, 3.xii.1914, Int.Bez. (Series II) VI (ii) 594.

4 F,O./371/2164/38083.

"Certainly I agree but Trieste should be thrown in."[1]

On 12 August, 1914, Imperiali presented Grey with nine conditions that might secure Italy's entry into the war. Amongst these were claims for the Trentino up to the Alpine watershed and Trieste. The Foreign Secretary declined to offer terms until Italy had in principle agreed to enter the war, but he did indicate that Italy's claims for the Trentino to the Alpine Watershed and for Trieste could be accepted "absolutely".[2]

Grey's enthusiasm in offering Trieste may well have been inspired by a desire to permanently eliminate Austrian naval power from the Mediterranean. Before the war the Admiralty had become increasingly disturbed by the construction of Austrian battleships and the consequent weakening of Britain's naval position in the Mediterranean.[3] In April, 1915, Churchill informed Asquith that:

> "The advantages of preventing Austria from having a navy are overwhelming."[4]

8. <u>The Position in November, 1914.</u>

By November, 1914, large parts of the Habsburg Empire had been reserved for distribution in the settlement. In the not unlikely event of Italy entering the war, and the war being brought to a successful conclusion, Austria would be reduced to little more than Bohemia, Austria proper, and a small Hungary. While Britain was not directly bound to

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.6.viii.1914, F.O.371/2162/3648.
2 Grey to Rodd, 12.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/38844.
3 Asquith to King George V, 14.v.1914, CAB/41/35.
4 Churchill to Asquith, 7.iv.1915, F.O./371/2508/41174.

destroy Austria, she was bound to allies who were themselves intent on doing so. On the assumptions that the future of Austria-Hungary was not a British interest, that Britain had no real powerto influence the settlement in Eastern and Central Europe, and that the concessions made would help to bring about a speedy end to the war, the British Government, or rather the Foreign Office in the name of the Government, had agreed to plans which virtually amounted to the dismemberment of the Austrian Empire. Whatever misgivings there had been about such a settlement, nothing had been done to save Austria. In September, 1914, Grey told the Italian Ambassador that he would "not lift a finger" to protect Austria.[1] The Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office could write:

> "We are absolutely bound to realize in great measure the aspirations of the Slavs, and I may also add the Poles. Austria will have to make up her mind, whether, she offered terms now (February, 1915) or hereafter, to find herself shorn of a considerable portion of her present dominions."[2]

9. Negotiated Peace with Austria.

Grey was never completely hopeful as to the outcome of the war,[3] and by early December, 1914, his doubts were beginning to take on political dimensions. It was becoming evident that there would be no early break-through on the Western Front. In the east, the Russian steamroller had trundled forward and sunk in the marshes of Tannenberg. While in the

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1 Imperiali to Di Sanguiliano, 16.ix.1914, D.D.I. (5th Series) I, 700.

2 Nicolson to Hardinge, 3.11.1915, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O./800/377.

3 Haldane, p.281.

Balkans, the Serbs, after initial successes against the Austrians, were drawing perilously close to disaster. As autumn turned into winter pessimism descended on the councils of the British Government. Military experts - Kitchener,[1] French[2] and Hankey[3] - felt that it would be an arduous task to drive the German armies from the west of Europe. The fertile minds of Churchill[4] and Lloyd George[5] began to conjure up visions of new theatres of war. Grey, always ready to voice his apprehensions, wrote:

> "We will, of course, make every effort to prevent the war from being a long one and are training men and developing equipment as fast as we can. What we fear is lest the war must be long in order to be conclusive and lest France should weary of the strain."[6]

If the war against the Central Powers could not be brought to a decisive conclusion, it was necessary either to scale down allied war aims,

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/166; Remarks on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Memorandum on the Conduct of the War, by Kitchener, 25.ii.1915. C.CAB./1/11.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 21.i.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/167.

3 Memorandum by Hankey, 28.xii.1914, Asquith Papers, M.S.113, published in Hankey, vol.I, pp.244-250: Hankey to Grey, 21.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/90.

4 Churchill to Asquith, 29.xii.1914, Asquith Papers, M.S.13; most of this letter is published in Churchill, vol.II, pp.44-45.

5 Suggestions as to the Military Position, by Lloyd George, 1.i.1915. C.A.B./24/1/9-2.

6 Grey to Bertie, 4.xii.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O./800/56(a).

or to alter the military balance. The most obvious terms to be jettisoned were those in which Britain had the least interest: the claims against Austria. If the war against Austria could be ended, then Germany might be fatally weakened and brought to her knees. While Hankey, Churchill and Lloyd George turned their attention to finding new theatres of war, Grey began to consider the possibility of a negotiated settlement with Austria.

The problem was one of great delicacy. Russia looked upon the war with Austria as being at least as important as the war against Germany.[1] It washher avowed intention to destroy the Habsburg Empire. If Russia were to believe that her allies were trying to cheat her of her heritage, then she might feel that the war was no longer worth the enormous sacrifices she was making, and conclude a peace with Germany. In October, 1914, Buchanan had reported rumours that Russia was considering making peace. There was a hint of uneasiness in Grey's reaction.

> "I wish to show it to the P.M. when I return, though I don't believe there is any chance of Russia coming to terms with Germany."[2]

The Foreign Secretary was therefore most cautious about raising the matter of a negotiated peace with the Dual Monarchy. On 2 December, 1914, he spoke to Benckendorff about the possibility of making a separate settlement with Austria. Grey suggested that in face of Serbian setbacks

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1 Smith, C.J., The Russian Struggle for Power, (New York, 1956).

2 Minute by Grey, undated, c.18.x.1914, F.O./371/2175/60766

it might be worth considering such a step. But sensitive to the Ambassador's reaction, he let the matter drop almost immediately.[1]

During December, 1914, there were reports that Austria herself sought to make peace with the Entente. Prince Borghese, the Counsellor at the Italian Embassy, reported that Count Forgasch, the head of the Austrian Foreign Office, had said:

> "both Austrian and Russian soldiers were tired of fighting and were anxious for peace - and perhaps it would be as well if peace were made."[2]

On 17 December, the Gazette de Lausanne published an article by an unnamed though high-ranking Austrian diplomat.[3] It stated that Austria would be willing to make peace on the basis of the status quo ante bellum: Russia receiving Constantinople, and in return withdrawing her support for Albania, Montenegro and Serbia. Sperling observed, somewhat optimistically, "another straw showing which way the wind is blowing."[4] On the 18 December, Rodd reported that the feeling in Rome was that Austria was done for.[5] Shortly afterwards, a secretary from the Spanish Embassy in Vienna came to London. His story was that the Austrian position was quite desperate: they were short of milk and coal and feared that Hungary might soon separate herself from the Empire. The Austrians would be prepared

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1 Benckendorff to Sazanow, 3.xii.1914, Int.Bez.(Series II) VI (ii) 594.

2 F.O./371/2176/80132.

3 F.O./371/2176/85265.

4 Minute by Sperling, 18.xii.1914, F.O./371/2176/85265.

5 Rodd to Grey, 18.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O./800/65.

to cede Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Galicia; their only wish to save Austria proper.[1]

Grey wanted to take advantage of any opportunity to negotiate a separate peace with Austria. After seeing the Foreign Secretary, Bertie noted:

> "that seemingly well-founded reports had been received that Austria is inclined to separate herself from Germany and make peace with Russia. He (Grey) does not think there can be any objection either from the British or French point of view. We have no animus against Austria."[2]

It was, however, over a fortnight before Grey began to sound out the Austrians. This interlude of nearly two and a half weeks is curious, and we can only speculate as to why Grey waited so long before he took any action. There are three possible reasons, none of which are exclusive of the others: Grey was turning the whole matter over in his mind; Russian military setbacks encouraged him to re-open the question; there was a secret visit by the French Foreign Minister to London on 4 January, 1915, during this visit it was decided to go behind Russia's back and to start negotiations with Vienna.

If peace was to be negotiated with Austria there were bound to be great difficulties in doing so. If the Russians were approached directly they would almost certainly have vetoed the suggestion out of hand. They might well have suspected that Britain was trying to preserve Austria in order to check their expansion. Fear of such hyper-sensitive reaction

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1 Report of Lord Murray of Elibank, 21.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O./800/101, see Appendix A.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/166.

was not unreasonable. Grey and Tyrrell were obliged to deny quite unofficial rumours of this type.[1] Grey, whose temperament was rather nervous, was extremely sensitive to the possibility of irrational reaction.

There was a second alternative: Britain should begin negotiations with Austria, and when the ground was prepared, she should then go to St. Petersburg. Such a procedure was also fraught with difficulties. Whatever the adjective secret meant in secret diplomacy, it did not mean private. The European system of diplomacy was conducted entirely on a pattern of personal contacts. Within such a system practically nothing could remain secret for any length of time. Leakages of information were the rule rather than the exception. The worst effect of such leakages was that stories were likely to become distorted, either because reports misrepresented the original facts, or because when men learnt of negotiations from which they were excluded they assumed that these talks were against their interests. Grey had experienced just such a situation over Anglo-Russian talks. Commenting on the excessive German reaction, he had observed:

> "I often thought, in these matters, that things would be better if the whole truth were known..... They (third parties) were apt to think that there was a great deal more than they had been told."[2]

In wartime the risks of leakage were infinitely greater because everyone had more to lose. When Balfour was Foreign Secretary, he found the same difficulty in secret peace negotiations. With a certain patrician

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1 Rodd to Grey, 25.1.1915, and attached notes by Tyrrell and Grey, and Grey to Rodd, tel., 26.1.1915, repeated to Barclay, Grey Papers, F.O./800/65.

2 Grey to Buchanan, 8.vii.1914, B.D.XI, 39.

disdain for the less fashionable areas of London, Balfour noted that if a peace proposal were leaked, they:

> "might just as well, indeed much better, be proclaimed at Charing Cross. At all events a proclamation at Charing Cross would accurately represent the facts."[1]

Such fears contributed to Grey's hesitation in again raising the question of a compromise settlement with the Dual Monarchy.

December, 1914, and early January, 1915, saw further Russian military setbacks. She was dangerously short of munitions, and had difficulty in holding the German armies in Poland. More ominously, on 2 January, there came news that the Russian armies had been badly worsted in their campaign against Turkey. The Grand Duke Nicholas appealed for some military effort from Britain that would ease the position of Russian troops in the Caucasus. Kitchener promised to do what he could, but he held out no great hope that any British demonstration would be of material value.[2] The deterioration in Russia's military position may well have led Grey to consider very seriously the possibility of opening negotiations with Austria-Hungary.

The French Government were as eager as the British to see a negotiated settlement with Austria. On 1 January, 1915, Paléologue, the French Ambassador at St.Petersburg, broached the subject with Sazanow. He suggested a peace on the basis of Austria-Hungary ceding Galicia and Bosnia and Hercegovina.[3] The Ambassador's short-term objective was to break the

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1 Peace Proposals, by Balfour, 28.ix.1917, CAB/29/1/P22.
2 Magnus, Sir P., Kitchener, (Penguin, 1968), pp.369-370; F.O./371/2504/540.
3 Paleologue, M., An Ambassador's Memoirs, translated by Holt, F.A., (1923) vol.I., p.235.

military deadlock; his long term aim was to maintain Austria-Hungary:

> "Tant qu'il existera une Allemagne et une Italie nous serons intéressés au maintien de l'Autriche."[1]

It would appear that on 4 or 5 January, Delcassé met with Grey and Asquith, and it was as a result of this meeting that Grey took the initiative on the question of negotiating peace with Austria. Delcassé's visit to London was very secret and there appear to be no records in the British archives of what was discussed. It is necessary to piece together the chain of events from fragmentary evidence. On 28 December, 1914, Bertie telegraphed that Delcassé wished to visit London.[2] Bertie said he did not know what the French Foreign Minister wished to discuss, but suggested that it might be bringing Japanese troops to Europe. Bertie's story had the ring of untruth about it. In the first place, Bertie's explanation of the purpose of the proposed visit is unsatisfactory. If it was indeed to discuss the question of bringing Japanese troops to Europe, then why did not Delcassé say so? The matter had been freely discussed between London and Paris. In the second place, Bertie said that Delcassé only "hinted" at a visit; but according to Cambon[3] the visit was of some importance to Delcassé. If Delcassé was willing to say this through Cambon then why not through Bertie?

There is one possible explanation: Bertie was trying to conceal his own activities from Grey. What he might have been trying to conceal was that he himself had been trying to solve the question of Austria-Hungary.

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1 Poincaré, Vol.VI, pp.5-6.
2 Bertie to Grey, 28.xii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O./800/56(a).
3 Grey to Bertie, tel., 3.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/57.

Bertie was vehemently anti-Russian, and he was resentful of Russia's Pan-Slav ambitions. He referred to Russia's

> "absurd and obsolete claim that she is the protectress of all Slav states."[1]

He was annoyed with Grey for not taking a stronger line in opposing Russian ambitions, and he had mentioned this to the Foreign Secretary on 18 December, 1914.[2] Moreover, Bertie knew that Grey was in favour of a negotiated settlement with Austria, and he also knew of the various rumours that Austria wanted peace.[3] In possession of this information, Bertie may well have seen an opportunity to prepare the way for a negotiated settlement with Austria, and mentioned the news from London at Paris. An ambassador had no right to do this, but it was typical of Bertie to take initiatives on his own account, and to try to use the French Government to implement his own ideas. He had done this during Grey's visit to Paris in April, 1914,[4] he did it again in March, 1915.[5] On the latter occasion, the Foreign Office were furious when they found out he had been trying to build a common Anglo-French policy against Russia. Clerk complained:

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1 Bertie, vol.I. p.2.

2 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/166.

3 Murray of Elibank to Bertie, 23/12/14, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/161

4 Memorandum by Bertie, 24.iv.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/166.

5 Chapter 5.

> "In fact, Sir F. Bertie was not asked to build bricks, all that he was asked to do was to put a definite question to the French Government and to ask for a definite reply..... if Sir F. Bertie had adhered to the text of his instructions he would have been doing what we wanted."[1]

If Bertie had been trying to co-ordinate Anglo-French policy towards Austria-Hungary then he was being very silly. Both Britain and France had an interest in using the other to do any "dirty work" at St. Petersburg. The French Government had no intention of incurring Russian odium by opposing her over Austria-Hungary; Paléologue was instructed to make it quite clear that anything he had said about a negotiated peace with Austria had been on his own initiative.[2]

Grey was suspicious of Delcassé's visit and Bertie's explanation. He replied that he would see Delcassé if it were really necessary, but:

> "Under the circumstances a visit of Delcassé to London would give rise to surmises, some of which would be undesirable though they would be unfounded; for it might be suggested that we met to discuss some inconclusive peace and we were giving in."[3]

The Foreign Secretary realized how bad it would look at St. Petersburg if it became known that the French and British Foreign Ministers had been discussing policy <u>à deux</u>.

On 3 January, Cambon returned to London and:

> "strongly urges (the) desire of M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs) to come to London this week to see (the) P.M. and Grey. He proposes to keep the visit secret. I (Grey) have agreed to see M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs)."[4]

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1 Minute by Clerk, 14.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/57.
2 Poincare, vol.V[illegible], pp.5-6.
3 Grey to Bertie, 31.xii.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O./800/56(a).
4 Grey to Bertie, tel.3.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/57.

There are no further records of Delcassé's secret visit in British archives. It would seem highly probably that the French Foreign Minister did visit London early in 1915. The date was almost certainly the 4 or 5 January. Grey wrote on 3 January, which was a Thursday, and he specifically referred to Delcassé coming "this week". Delcassé's visit can therefore be pinned down to Friday 4 or Saturday 5. It was on the 5 January that Grey took the initiative in the question of negotiated settlement with Austria-Hungary. The evidence is circumstantial; but it would seem possible that Grey's decision to put out peace feelers to Vienna was the result of his conversations with Delcassé. Indeed, the whole purpose of Delcassé's visit could have been to persuade Grey to take the lead in this matter. Certainly in February and March, 1915, the Foreign Office were suspicious that France was trying to use Britain to oppose Russian ambitions, while at the same time keeping her own hands clean.[1] There is one further piece of evidence which points to the fact it was Delcassé who persuaded Grey to open the question of a negotiated peace with Austria. When, on 7 January, Grey spoke to the Spanish Ambassador, he told him that:

"France and ourselves have no quarrel with Austria."[2]

Now it is unlikely that Grey would have spoken for France to a foreign diplomatist if he had not already obtained French sanction. There is no record in the Foreign Office archives of a report on the attitude of the Franch Government towards Austria-Hungary.

Towards the end of 1914 Britain had sent a mission to the Vatican. It was headed by Sir H. Howard, a senior diplomat. Howard had on his staff

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1 Chapter V.

2 Memorandum by Grey, 7.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.

J. D. Gregory. Gregory was a more interesting personality: he was the possessor of an extraordinarily pretty handwriting and most disagreeable character. His career ended somewhat abruptly in the late twenties when it was discovered that he had been using his position to speculate on currency exchange rates.[1] He then had the temerity to write his memoirs,[2] which were totally undistinguished and consisted mostly of anecdotes designed to show the vileness of Roumanian Jews.

On 5 January, 1915, Grey telegraphed to Howard. Howard was instructed to sound out clerical circles about rumours that:

> "Austria-Hungary is anxious for peace and might be disposed to enter into discussions with the allies as to terms of peace independently of Germany."[3]

Howard was urged tobe discreet in enquiries he made. Clearly a most awkward situation would have arisen had Russia found out.

Two days later, 7 January, Grey saw the Spanish Ambassador. The Spanish Monarchy, linked by blood, sentiment and religion to the Habsburgs at Vienna, had already shown some interest in the question of a peace between Austria and the Entente, and Madrid was therefore an obvious channel of communication.[4] The Foreign Secretary advised the Spanish Ambassador that Britain and France had no claims against Austria, but that the Dual Monarchy would have to come to terms with Russia. If Austria wanted peace she should let this be known and state her terms at St. Petersburg.[5]

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1 The so-called "francs case", The Times, 30.1.1951, p.8.
2 Gregory, J.D., On the Edge of Diplomacy: Rambles and Reflections, 1902-1928 (1930) 1914
3 Grey to Rodd (for Howard), tel., 5.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/1500,
4 Gottlieb, pp.296-7.
5 Memorandum by Grey, 7.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/95.

All this was too much for Sir Arthur Nicolson; he felt Russia would never agree to make peace with Austria, and that Grey was following a silly and possibly dangerous policy in going behind Russia's back to negotiate with Austria. On the same day as Grey saw the Spanish Ambassador, Nicolson wrote a private letter to Buchanan:

> "It is appalling to think of the difficulties which will arise when the moment comes for the discussion of peace terms. I cannot imagine any peace which will be more difficult. It will practically amount to a remodelling of the map of Europe and we shall have to find some means of liquidating both the Dual Monarchy and the Turkish Empire."[1]

Nicolson was, perhaps, trying to cover the tracks of his Chief without actually telling Buchanan what was happening.

The news from Rome was far from encouraging. Howard advised the Foreign Office that the feeling in the Vatican was that while Austria was suffering badly from the war, there was no real indication that she wished to make peace separately from Germany. Nicolson was greatly relieved, and rather smugly noted: "It is not likely that Austria will conclude a separate peace."[2]

9. Negotiated Peace with Hungary.

On the 14, January, Howard reported that the Habsburg family were making some attempts to persuade the Papacy to save the dynasty, even if this involved sacrificing Galicia.[3] Shortly afterwards events took a most unexpected turn. Instead of making contacts with the Austrians,

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1 Nicolson to Buchanan, 7.1.1915, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O./800/377.
2 F.O./371/2505/2520.
3 Howard to Grey, tel., 14.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/3262.

Howard made contact with the Hungarian Nationalist Party. Taking a very liberal interpretation of his instructions, the Ambassador had actually begun to negotiate with the representative of this group, a Count Szapary. Szapary had asked to see Howard at the British Embassy in Rome, and Howard had agreed to this. The Magyar explained that he had authority to speak for the Hungarian Nationalist Party and its leader, Prince Apponyi. Szapary proposed a deal: Hungary would declare her independence from Austria and make peace with the allies. In return the Entente would recognise the new Hungarian régime and respect the territorial integrity of Hungary. Howard, without waiting for instructions, agreed that Szapary should return to Budapest and fetch Apponyi. The Nationalist leader would then come back with Szapary and they would have a secret meeting with him.[1]

The crux of the Hungarian question turned on the Russo-Roumanian agreement of October, 1914. The Hungarians wanted to save the Roumanian provinces of Hungary. They feared that Roumania would soon enter the war on the side of the Entente, and that if this happened then she would demand Roumanian Transylvania. According to Szapary, the Roumanians were really quite happy under Hungarian rule; the Roumanians only wanted selfish expansion and intended to absorb Slav as well as Roumanian areas of Austria-Hungary. The Roumanians argued their case from the basis of religion and nationality; it would serve the Catholic cause if the Roumanian territories of the Habsburg Empire were incorporated into Roumania proper. Gregory, who did not share Howard's desire for a separate peace

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1 Howard to Grey, tel., 16.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/6149; Howard to Grey, tel., 16.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/6150.

with Hungary, endeavoured to sabotage his efforts; in his immaculate hand he wrote private letters to Tyrrell and put the Roumanian case:

> "I had a conversation with M.Diamandy..... the semi-official agent of Bratiano (the Roumanian Prime Minister) ..... M. Diamandy had heard however that our F.O. in London was lending an ear to similar proposals (for negotiated peace with Hungary). He feared very much that we were not 'au courant' with the situation as regards Hungary and we still adhered to our old conceptions that Hungary represented a liberal country like ours etc. - we were still under Gladstonian sentiments. I said such ideas had been exploded by Seton-Watson and others."[1]

The permanent officials at the Foreign Office were none too pleased with Howard's initiative. Clerk, who could normally have been relied upon to be quite Machiavellian, referred Grey to the nationality principle and the morality of negotiating a settlement with Hungary:

> "I venture to record my belief that to leave Transylvania under the Magyars without strong evidence that the population desire it may prove a costly price even for peace with Hungary."[2]

Max Müller, the Foreign Office expert on Hungary, came out strongly against the prospect of a settlement with Hungary, and also invoked the nationality principle:

> "Apart from the obligation of our Russian ally towards Roumania, we should be acting contrary to the principle of nationality if we agreed to leave a population of three million Roumanians under Magyar domination, besides providing combustible material for a future conflagration in that part of the world."[3]

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1 Gregory to Tyrrell, 20.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/67.

2 Minute by Clerk, 17.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/6149.

3 Memorandum by Müller, 18.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O./800/95.

Nicolson was very angry that Howard should have taken so much upon himself, and strongly advised Grey to have nothing to do with the Hungarians: to do so would be contrary to the nationality principle; it would be foolish to put any faith in an opposition party. The Foreign Secretary was warned that the question would have to be referred to the Russians and:

> "I (Nicolson) have no doubt as to what St. Petersburg will reply."[1]

While Grey was reluctant to give up the negotiations, he found the logic of the arguments against pursuing them to be insurmountable. He informed Howard:

> "You are quite right to listen to and report any proposals made" .... but .... "I fear this proposal is impractical."[2]

Paris and St. Petersburg[3] were informed. Sazanow held that a peace with Hungary would be contrary to the promises he had made to Roumania. He suggested that the Hungarians be kept in tow with assurances that the allies were sympathetic to the Hungarian cause.[4] A proposal to which Grey reacted with Gladstonian outrage:

> "The proposal,.... is not honest. Russia has told Roumania she can have Transylvania if she remained neutral."[5]

One suspects that Grey's annoyance was in part with the fact that Russia had indirectly committed Britain. None-the-less, the minute must have

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 17.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/6149.
2 Grey to Howard, tel., 17.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/6149.
3 Grey to Bertie, tel., 19.1.1915, repeated to Buchanan and Barclay, F.O./371/2505/7101.
4 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 25.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/9523.
5 Minute by Grey, undated, c.26.1.1915, F.O./371/2505/9523.

caused some raising of eyebrows in the Foreign Office. It was only later that Grey found out from Cambon that Russia was not bound to obtain Transylvania for Roumania, and she was only obliged not to object if Roumania claimed it.[1] But for the time being at least the quest for a negotiated settlement with Austria was over.

These feelers for a negotiated peace with Austria-Hungary were conducted very much as had been foreign policy pre-war: authority rested firmly in the hands of the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office. However, there can be observed the seeds of subsequent developments. Firstly, throughout this period Lloyd George was employing his ferocious energies not just in considering problems of finance, but also in solving problems of foreign policy and strategy. As yet his influence on foreign policy was not significant, but it is interesting to note that he more than any other minister looked seriously at the possibility of a separate peace with the Dual Monarchy.[2] The belief that the allies might be able to conclude a separate peace with Austria-Hungary remained with Lloyd George throughout the conflict.[3] Secondly, one can observe that established diplomatic procedures were unable to cope with the problems of war, and this contributed to the growing ascendency of military criteria in determining the course of Britain's foreign relations. While Grey wanted a negotiated settlement with the Habsburg Empire, he was floundering once he attempted to pursue this end. This is less a reflection on Grey than a revelation of a basic truth about war:

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.22.v.1915, F.O.371/2505/64943.
2 Murray of Elibank to Bertie, 23.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/161; Note by Lloyd George on Memorandum by Murray of Elibank, 21.xii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C/25/f8.
3 There was the well-known mission by Smuts and Kerr; less well-known are the negotiations in Copenhagen early in 1917, Paget Papers, add.51253; Lloyd George to Balfour, 12.ii.1917, Balfour Papers, F.O.800/199.

military action is perhaps just another means of pursuing diplomatic objectives, but it is a means that is exclusive of diplomacy. Violence is dramatic and it can bring dazzling rewards, but it is never a subtle instrument of policy.

10. Conclusion.

On one level British war aims with regard to Austria-Hungary can be viewed as dualist. In the first four months of the war Britain had accepted the ambitions of Russia, Roumania, Serbia and Italy. Ambitions which, if realized, would have meant a considerable reduction of the Habsburg Empire. From late November onwards, Grey was prepared to accept a settlement which for all he cared would have left Austria-Hungary as it was when the war broke out.

On a profounder level this dualism was a manifestation of a fundamental unity of ideas and attitudes. British interests were seen to lie in driving the German armies from France and Belgium, and in securing Western Europe from further German aggression. What happened in Eastern and Central Europe was of little importance. When it seemed that the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire would help to defeat Germany, it was accppted as desirable; when it appeared that a negotiated peace with Austria would help to bring Germany to her knees, then a negotiated settlement was acceptable.

It can be observed that Britain was in a rather paradoxical position. While she had little interest in the precise nature of the settlement in

Eastern and Central Europe, she found herself shackled to allies who were devoting much of their energies, physical and spiritual, to tearing down the Habsburg Empire. There was an uncomfortable discrepancy between the limited nature of British interests and the open-ended character of her commitments. This problem was patently obvious to men at the time, and the way in which Grey sought to resolve this unfortunate situation is a story that revolves around the question of Constantinople and the Straits.

CHAPTER V

RUSSIA: CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE STRAITS

1. Introduction.

In their struggle against Germany the alliance with Tsarist Russia was the blackest mark against the cause of the Western Democracies. To the war-weary peoples of the 1920's nothing symbolised the idiocy of the old diplomacy like the alliance with Russia; nothing weighed so heavily against the record of Britain's wartime diplomacy as the Straits Agreement of March, 1915. The Entente had, it seemed, been fighting a war for Russian imperialism. For the pacifist left, the agreement over Constantinople and the Straits demonstrated that the allies had been every bit as cynical as the Central Powers; E.D.Morel complained that the purpose of the war was to crush Germany and

> "to make Russia mistress of the N(ear) E(ast), to give her Constantinople, and to extend her territory in Europe. That is what our sons are being conscripted for."[1]

In defence of the Government, it was argued that the Straits agreement was forced by

> "the madness (of Tsardom) which insisted that peace must not be made until Constantinople and half of Turkey had been added to the Russian Empire."[2]

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1 Morel to Ponsonby, undated, (copy), c.December, 1916, Morel Papers, Box.F.8.

2 Hirst, F.W., And Allen, F.E., British War Budgets (1926), p.26.

Historians have been less emotive, but they have not produced fundamentally different interpretations of the agreement of March, 1915.[1] The agreement was expansionist and the initiative and impulse for it was Russian.

The opening of the Foreign Office archives has provided students with an opportunity to look again at the events surrounding the decision to allow Russia to have Constantinople. The archives do not disappoint those looking for fresh insights into familiar issues. They reveal that the question of Constantinople was a central thread in Anglo-Russian relations, and when this thread is pulled it is seen to touch on much broader issues: the future of Russia in the post-war world; Grey's plans for a peace settlement.

Historians have tended to exaggerate the harmony in Anglo-Russian relations from 1907 onwards. They have seen it from the perspective of the origins of the First World War, and the tightening of the bonds of the European alliance system. Such a conception distorts the character of Anglo-Russian relations. Britain and Russia did not share any fundamental community of interest, and the Asiatic agreements of 1907 only papered over their differences in Persia and the East. Beneath the surface there was continual tension and suspicion, and periodically their differences in Asia threatened to disrupt their fragile understanding. It was not only in Asia that Britain and Russia disagreed: Russia was not content to be the passive counterpoise to Germany that Grey wished, and her policy and ambitions in the Balkans were a source of embarrassment to Britain.

The Russian problem was similar to the German problem: both were

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1 Kerner, R.J., Russia, the Straits and Constantinople, J.M.H. 1,111.(1929). Smith, C.J., - Great Britain and the 1914-1915 Straits Agreement with Russia: The Promises of November, 1914, A.H.R.CXXX, No.4 - challenges the accepted view. But this author finds it difficult to follow his footnotes, and feels his analysis of the promises of November to be erroneous.

autocratic and aggressive Powers of immense strength. In the case of Germany, an enemy, war aims were directed towards containing and restricting her power. With Russia, an ally, it was impossible to follow such a simple course: British war aims were directed towards diverting Russian power in that direction that was least inconsistent with British interests. This policy revolved around Constantinople and the Straits.

Between August and November, 1914, Anglo-Russian relations stumbled from one crisis to another: first in the Balkans, and then in Persia, Russia pursued a policy that was damaging to British interests. Grey promised Russia Constantinople and the Straits as her reward for co-operation. From December, 1914, onwards, it became evident that Russia would not be able to realise her ambitions in Europe. This brought with it an obvious problem: where was Russia to find compensation for her sacrifices in the war? Grey resolved to substitute Russian ambitions in Europe with the offer of expansion at the expense of Turkey. The agreement of March, 1915, was not simply a concession to Russian indemands, it was a reflection of Anglo-Russian relations in their totality.

2. The Background to the Straits Question.

During the nineteenth century the belief that Russia had to be kept out of the Mediterranean and the integrity of the Ottoman Empire maintained was dogma in British strategic doctrine. In a lucid and informative essay on the Straits question, the late Sir James Headlam-Morley wrote:

> "Pitt laid down the principle that the maintenance of the Turkish Empire was a British interest .... He was thinking of the defence of India and the maintenance of British sea power in the Levant ..... obviously a most dangerous situation would arise if this (the Russian) fleet were able to use the Dardanelles as an impregnable base."[1]

Whether the doctrine was ever quite as sacrosanct in the minds of statesment as in the hearts of a chauvinistic people is open to speculation and research: certainly by the turn of the century ideas were being examined and revised.

The acquisition of Cyprus and Egypt strengthened Britain's naval position in the Eastern Mediterranean[2] and lessened the danger of Russian sea power in that area. In 1903, a Sub-Committee of the C.I.D. (Committee of Imperial Defence) met under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, and considered how Britain's strategic position in the Mediterranean would be affected should Russia possess Constantinople with free access to the Mediterranean. The unanimous conclusion of the Sub-Committee was that such an eventuality would not "fundamentally alter the present strategic situation in the Mediterranean", and that the "maintenance of the status quo as regards Constantinople is not one of the primary interests of this country."[3] The War Office[4] and the Admiralty[5] agreed

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1 Headlam-Morley, Sir James, Studies in Diplomatic History (1930), p.220.
2 Headlam-Morley, p.237. It is doubtful whether Cyprus was of quite the significance that Headlam-Morley maintains. There was no large naval base there, and it was not felt to have a good harbour, see Fisher to Kitchener, 11.iii.1915, Kitchener Papers, P.R.O.30/57/80, "we don't want a barren island in the Mediterranean."
3 Report of Conclusions arrived at 11th February, in Reference to Russia and Constantinople, by A.J.Balfour, 14.11.1903, CAB.4/1/R1b.
4 Memorandum by W.G.Nicholson, Director General of Mobilization and Military Intelligence, 23.11.1903, CAB.4/1/R1b.
5 Admiralty Memorandum, February 1903, CAB.4/1/R1b.

with the findings of the Sub-Committee. The succeeding Liberal Government accepted and endorsed the findings of the C.I.D. Sub-Committee. During the Bosnian crisis of 1908, Asquith informed Balfour:

> "I attach very little strategic value - so far as I am concerned - to the maintenance of existing restrictions and this is the opinion of our military and naval advisers."[1]

It was, however, the Anglo-Russian Entente which brought about a reversal of Britain's polical opposition to Russia's aspiration to have a secure outlet to the Mediterranean. From the very inception of the understanding with Russia Grey was willing to consider a relaxation of existing restrictions regarding the Straits. It was a price worth paying for an improvement in Anglo-Russian relations.[2] Between 1907 and 1914 the Foreign Secretary was always prepared to support, at least to some extent, Russian claims for free access to the Mediterranean.

In 1908, Iswolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, came to London and asked for an opening of the Straits as Russia's compensation for the Austrian annexation of Bosnia. After consulting with the Cabinet, Grey agreed that "the opening of the Straits was fair and reasonable and in principle (I) will not oppose it." This was as far as he was willing to go. The public at large was not yet ready to accept a complete reversal of nineteenth century traditions. If Russia pressed her claims too hard Englishmen might have refused to accept the Entente with Russia. Iswolsky

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1 Asquith to Balfour, 15.x.1908, Balfour Papers, add.49692.
2 Grey to Nicolson, 6.xi.1906, quoted in Grey, vol.I, pp.161-163.

was asked to bide his time and to be content with an undertaking that the matter would be reviewed in good faith when a more opportune moment presented itself.[1] The Russian Foreign Minister agreed to do so, but added a rider: if when the time came Grey went back on his promise, then that would be the end of Anglo-Russian Entente. Grey, who could be about as jumpy as Asquith and Balfour were imperturbable, hastened to reassure Iswolsky:

> "I positively desire an agreement which will open the Straits on terms acceptable to Russia..... such an arrangement seems to me essential to the permanent establishment of good relations between Russia and ourselves."[2]

The undertakings given in 1908 left an obligation to review Russian claims in sympathetic spirit at a later date. When, in lte October, 1914, Turkey attacked Russia, Russia had a *prima facie* case for asking Britain to redeem her pledges. Moral obligations were not altogether trivial to Grey. In December, 1914, he told Bertie that:

> "We must carry out our promises of 1908."[3]

But Grey's morality was a flexible creature: he invoked it (more subconsciously than consciously) when it suited ulterior purposes. The promises remained valid and important because the Russian Entente still had implications for the security of the Empire in the East.

> "Grey observed," noted Bertie, "that he wished to deal tolerantly with Sazanow because the interests of Russia and England in Persia are difficult to reconcile."[4]

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1 Aide-Memoire given to Iswolsky, 14.x.1908, B.D. V, 377; Grey to Iswolsky, 15.x.1908, B.D. V, 388.
2 Grey to Iswolsky, 15.x.1908, B.D. V, 388.
3 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 18.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.

The sending of the German Military Mission of General Liman von Sanders to Constantinople, and the ensuing crisis of the winter in 1913-1914, re-opened the question of Russian access to the Mediterranean. The Russians felt that German control of the Porte would mean that their exit to the Mediterranean was barred for ever.[1] The crisis co-incided with the Anglo-German détente, and Grey was reluctant to support Russia unconditionally. He tried to pursue an independent policy.[2] Buchanan reported that Sazanow was "furious",[3] and Grey was obliged to recognise that his independence was limited:

> "I do not believe that the whole thing is worth all the fuss that Sazanow makes about it; but so long as he does make a fuss it will be important and embarrassing to us for we cannot turn our backs on Russia.[4]... we should find ourselves back in our bad relations."[5]

There was no pacific interlude between the Liman von Sanders crisis and the Sarajevo crisis; the tremors of the one merged with the other. Buchanan warned that Russia would seize the first opportunity to reverse her setbacks at Constantinople. Moreover, she would judge the merits of her alliance with France and her entente with England according to the support she was given in her dispute with Germany.[6] In May, 1914, the Cabinet still considered the struggle at Constantinople sufficiently

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1 Bestuzchev, V., Russian Foreign Policy, February - June, 1914, J.C.H. I, iii.
2 Chapter II.
3 Buchanan to Grey, 23.xii.1913, B.D. X (1), 446.
4 Grey to Goschen, 2.i.1914, B.D. X (1), 457.
5 Grey to Goschen, 15.xii.1913, B.D. (i), 431.
6 Buchanan to Grey, 7.i.1914, B.D. (i), 463.

dangerous as to preclude Anglo-Russian naval talks including the Mediterranean.[1] Thus, at the outbreak of the war the question of Russia's position at Constantinople was still a very live issue, and it seemed not unlikely that Russia would turn her attentions to overthrowing German ascendancy at the Porte and realising her traditional ambitions.

3. The General Background to Anglo-Russian Relations.

There has been a monograph on Anglo-Russian Entente, of 1907 to 1917, and unfortunately our histories on the origins of the war of 1914 have exaggerated the extent of Anglo-Russian friendship. Britain and Russia were uneasy allies, and unless this point is grasped it is impossible to understand the development of British war aims.

One stumbling block to a very cordial Anglo-Russian understanding was the nature of Tsarist autocracy. Its repressive character was distasteful to the Liberal Government and its supporters. This mood of aggressive liberalism did nothing to temper the Tsarist system, but it did impose limits on the intimacy of the understanding with Russia. As Macauley once observed:

> "We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the English public in one of its fits of periodical morality."[2]

Russian autocracy also had its diplomatic face, and it was this, more than internal dictatorship, that offended Grey and his colleagues and subordinates. The Russian Government, being free from populer restraints,

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1 Asquith to King George V, 14.v.1914, CAB.41/35.
2 Quoted in Blake, R., Disraeli (1966), p.146.

was felt capable of acting in a more wayward, capricious and aggressive manner than governments beholden to public opinion at home. Policy was open to the influence of irresponsible cliques and cabals, and its harmony could be upset by the idiosyncrasies of individual personalities. Even the Russophile Sir Arthur Nicolson could write that Russia had "an autocratic, and if you like some unscrupulous, Government."[1] In February, 1914, Bertie found Grey to be:

> "very much preoccupied at the internal situation in Russia and the vacillating policy of the Russian Government in foreign affairs, the result of contending factions at court and the weakness of the Emperor and want of concord in the Russian Cabinet."[2]

In consequence the Foreign Office felt uneasy when dealing with Russia: there was always the fear that she might do the unexpected. This is important for an understanding of the nervous character of British policy towards Russia during the war.

Russian power seemed the more dangerous and daunting when (after 1912) she began to re-organise her armed forces, to put her finances in sound order, and to embark on a process of rapid industrialisation. In the year or so before the outbreak of war, it was widely believed that Russia would soon outstrip Germany as Europe's major military power.[3] Undoubtedly Russia's military might was exaggerated. Men tended to forget the drawbacks of a centralised bureaucracy, they saw an autocratic system as

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1 Nicolson to Hardinge, 11.vi.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/379.
2 Memorandum by Bertie, 16.ii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.
3 See especially the correspondence between Nicolson and Buchanan in the Carnock Papers.

a singular advantage in any sustained pursuit of international power. Strangely, it was Liberals in the Gladstonian tradition, men who praised the efficiency of individual enterprise, who brought out this argument most frequently. Lord Morley told C.P.Scott that:

> "Russia was rapidly becoming a menace to Europe with her vast and rapidly increasing population and also her rapidly increasing prosperity. The Duma was no check to the ambitions of the ruling classes. Germany, he thought, was right and she would need every man."[1]

But the argument was also used by Conservatives. Arthur Nicolson, comparing Russian and British power, wrote:

> Russia had "an autocratic Government, with unlimited resources at its disposal, while on the other hand we have a country with a parliamentary Government with very limited means at its disposal and obliged to consider political and parliamentary exigencies at home. There is little doubt under such conditions which country is likely to gain the upper hand eventually."[2]

Fashionable geopolitical doctrines also tended to encourage an overestimation of Russian power. The Russian "heartland" appeared as an impregnable fortress. Grey thought Germany would never be able to inflict a decisive military defeat on Russia. Whatever initial successes Germany obtained, Russia would be able to retire deep into her Eurasian citadel, where she would summon up reserves of spiritual and physical power which would ensure her survival if not her triumph.[3]

> "If the Germans win," he speculated in September, 1914, "Prussian militarism will domirate the whole of Europe, with the exception of Russia, who will remain a Power in the east of Europe and in Asia."[4]

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1 Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 29-30.v.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
2 Nicolson to Hardinge, 11.vi.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374.
3 Grey to Bertie, 1.v.1914, B.D. X (ii), 541.
4 Grey to Roosevelt, 10.ix.1914, quoted in Grey, vol.II, pp.138-139, also Grey Papers, F.O.800/110.

Just as Britain was the supreme example of a great sea-based Empire in the style of Mahon, so Russia was the outstanding example of a land-based Empire: each was dominant and immutable, protected by the theories of Empires.

The exaggeration of Russian power was of some significance for, like Italy in the 1920's, her bargaining position was much stronger than in retrospect it appeared. Unless this element of misjudgement is understood, it is easy to misunderstand the concessions that came to be made.

In the First World War, as in the Second, Britain and Russia had little more in common than a mutual enemy. In the Balkans and in Persia their policies were in direct opposition. Both these problems were carried overffrom the pre-war era into war aims, and it is easiest to follow them through the internal debate in the Foreign Office.

The resurgence of Russian power from 1912 onwards did not only affect Germany, it cast a shadow over Britain's position in Persia and Central Asia. Moreover, Russia, conscious of her growing strength, began to pursue a more forceful policy in the Balkans; a policy which threatened to involve Britain in conflicts in which she had no interest. There arose two schools of thought as how best to meet the Russian menace. The one was represented by Sir Arthur Nicolson and Sir George Buchanan; the other by Sir William Tyrrell and Sir Edward Grey.

Buchanan felt that the enormity of Russian power obliged Britain to follow her bidding. He argued that a breach in the Entente would have a most unfavourable effect on Britain's position in Persia and the East.

Sazanow, who was not the most serene of men, helped to encourage his anxieties by engaging in periodic displays of ill-temper. The manners of the Russian Foreign Minister anticipated those of his Bolshevik successors. Buchanan's despatches are full of references to Sazanow's histrionics. A fairly typical report ran:

> "I have never seen Sazanow so angry, and his temper is not unlikely to be improved by the memorandum (on Persia) Sir Edward Grey is going to give Bgnckendorff."[1]

He set down all his doubts and fears about Anglo-Russian relations in lengthy letters to the Permanent Under Secretary.[2]

Nicolson took up Buchanan's arguments with the Foreign Secretary. Nicolson was enormously pro-Russian; he would refer unashamedly to "my beloved Russians."[3] An atistocrat by birth, a paternalist by temperament, and a conservative by conviction, he saw little untoward in the political system of Tsarist Russia. The fear that Russia would find Britain an unsatisfactory friend became a near obsession. In 1913 and 1914 his correspondence was filled with references to the grave dangers involved in offending Russia.

Tyrrell and Grey looked at the Russian problem in a different light. The Anglo-Russian agreement over Persia had never worked well: Russian agents methodically, and in defiance of the agreement, tightened their grip on Northern Persia, and extended their influence into the neutral zone.

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1 Buchanan to Nicolson, 11.vi.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/379.
2 See Carnock Papers.
3 Nicolson to Buchanan, 15.iii.1915, (copy), F.O.800/377.

Her policy of organising the Balkan States against Turkey and Austria threatened to involve Britain in dangerous squabbles, and perhaps even in war. They recognised the importance of maintaining the Entente, but insisted that Russia had to be brought to heel. Tyrrell found Nicolson's policy hopelessly passive, and complained to Sir Valentine Chirol about the attitude of the Permanent Under Secretary:

> "who still wanted to leave the Russians to pipe the tune and us to dance to it whatever it may be."[1]

Tyrrell wanted to use the Anglo-German détente as a lever to screw concessions out of Russia:

> "William Tyrrell is very perky indeed," Chirol wrote Hardinge in April 1913, he "thinks that all is for the best of all possible Europes and paints our own position as absolutely <u>couleur de rose</u>. He seems to think that we can now 'snap our fingers at the Triple Alliance and at France and Russia, upon the latter of whom he had gone back in the most astonishing way .... He is convinced ... that we are relieved .... from the German menace and can therefore take a somewhat firmer line with Russia without compromising the Entente."[2]

It was to Tyrrell's advice that Grey listened. In 1913 and 1914 he pursued a much tougher policy in Persia, and refused to co-ordinate Anglo-Russian policy in the Balkans.[3] He insisted that the best policy was to co-operate with Germany in Europe, and argued that to allow Russia to dictate Britain's policy in Balkan disputes would mean that Britain

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1 Chirol to Hardinge, 23.v.1913, Hardinge Papers, vol.71.
2 Chirol to Hardinge, 18.iv.1913, Hardinge Papers, vol.93.
3 Note du Ministre, 24.iv.1914, D.D.F. (3rd Series), X, p.269.

would be dragged into quarrels in which she had no interest.[1] Nicolson bitterly resented Grey's policy, and his letters are filled with thinly veiled criticisms:

> "I fear," he wrote to Buchanan in April, 1914, "that before long we shall find that this hesitating policy will lead to unfortunate results and we shall find ourselves being given up as untrustworthy and undecided friends. This increases my fear lest Russia in giving us up in despair will take steps towards bringing herself into closer relations with Germany, and of course such a new course on her part would seriously react upon our relations with her in the Mid(dle) and Far East."[2]

It was the Sarajevo crisis that brought Anglo-Russian differences into the open. Grey refused to join Russia in bullying Vienna;[3] he absolutely declined to consider going to war as long as the conflict concerned only Germany, Austria, Russia and Serbia;[4] he refused Russian requests to threaten Germany with British intervention.[5] Grey was by no means the most extreme in his suspicions of Russia; Bertie[6] and many members of the Cabinet freely stated that Russia was the aggressor.[7] When Britain entered the war, it was not as the ally of Russia, but as the defender of her own interests in the North-West of Europe. Anglo-Russian differences over Persia were to continue without respite.

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1 Grey to Buchanan, 7.v.1914, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/74.
2 Nicolson to Buchanan, 7.iv.1914, (copy), Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374.
3 Chapter II.
4 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 25.vii.1914, B.D. XI, 112.
5 Chapter II.
6 Bertie, Viscount of Thame, Diary, 1914-1918 (1924), vol.I, p.2.
7 Lord Crewe's answer to questionnaire of J.A.Spender and Professor Temperley, Spender Papers, add.46386.

4. August to November, 1914.

At the outset of the war in Europe there had been practically no joint Anglo-Russian military or naval planning. Military talks had been ruled out on the grounds that any British expeditionary force would be sent to the West of Europe to fight alongside the French Army.[1] Almost certainly the ulterior motive was to avoid entanglements with Russia. Anglo-Russian naval talks had hardly got under way when events were overtaken by the coming of war.[2] To make matters worse communications were poor. In 1913 the General Staff had come out in favour of a direct wireless link to Russia, but nothing seems to have been done about this.[3] Furthermore, it was felt to be dangerous to send military information by telegram because it was suspected that the Germans had the cypher of the Russian Embassy in

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1 Grey to Bertie, 1.v.1914, B.D. X (ii), 541.

2 In his The Struggle for Mastery in Europe (1954), pp.512-513, Mr. A.J.P.Taylor states that the reasons for the delay in Anglo-Russian naval talks was that the Cabinet made them conditional upon an agreement over Persia. Mr. Taylor has provided no footnote which would indicate where he gained this intelligence. It would seem that he based his conclusion on a Minute by Oliphant, 7.iv.1914, B.D. X (ii) 537. This suggestion was never acted upon - Asquith to King George V, 14.v.1914, CAB.41/35. The reason for the delay in talks was that Churchill did not think that the Russian Naval Attaché in London was a sufficiently elevated personage to deal with such matters - Churchill to Grey, 14.vii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88. The talks were to be negotiated by Battenberg when he visited his Russian relatives in August, 1914 - Battenberg to Nicolson, 23.v.1914; Minute by Nicolson, 25.v.1914; Minute by Grey, c.25.v.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/374.

3 C.I.D. Meeting, 11.iv.1913, CAB.2/3.

London.[1] What was known of Russian plans was hardly encouraging; they involved an advance on Austria.[2]

Throughout the early part of the war the British Government were continually complaining that Russia was not fully co-operating with her allies. Asquith wrote to King George V:

> "There is a strong feeling in the Cabinet that the Russian military authorities should be more ready than they have hereto shown themselves to take both the French and ourselves in their confidences."[3]

This distrust and exasperation was but the manifestation of political tensions and deep-rooted suspicions that lay beneath. There existed a fear that Russia would seize the opportunity to realise gains at the expense of Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, and would leave Britain and France in the lurch in the vital struggle with Germany.

Britain had only been at war for a single day when the sinister pattern of Russian intentions seemed to come to light. It appeared that Sazanow was preparing for a war in the Balkans and against Turkey at just the moment when Britain needed her to throw all her weight against Germany. On 6 August, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs telegraphed to his ambassadors in London and Paris that he had information that the Austrian fleet, possibly aided by Turkish and German vessels, would attack Russia in the Black Sea.[4] At the same time, and without consulting Britain and

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1 Minute by Grey, 19.i.1915, on Churchill to H.I.H. the Grand Duke Nicholas, tel., 19.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/75. The point being that the Russians would transmit information back to their Embassy in London. The Russians were themselves not free from sharp practice; they had the most complex system of espionage of all the Powers. The British Embassy at St.Petersburg had to suffer Russian agents masquerading as servants and the Russian Foreign Office regularly tapping the telegraph to London.

2 Buchanan, G., My Mission in Russia (1923), vol.I, p.216.

3 Asquith to King George V, 22.x.1914, CAB.41/35.

4 Sazanow to Benckendorff, tel., 6.viii.1914, Int.Bex.(Series II) VI, 13.

France, negotiations were begun at Bucharest with a view to bringing Roumania into the war.[1] By the 8 August, Sazanow was claiming that the German Military Mission was in full control at Constantinople and there could be no doubt of Turkey's intention to enter the war. Russia asked for a joint warning to the Porte that an act of war against one of the Entente Powers would be considered as an act of war against them all.[2] The logic of Russian policy seemed inescapable when, on 13 August, there came news that she was sending troops down to her frontier with Turkey.[3] Russia was plotting war against the Ottoman Empire.

Russian intentions were a source of multiple embarrassments to Britain. The system of imperial defence was untried. Grey, as always fearing the worst, felt that the Empire might not be equal to the strains of war. On the 2 August, when he had told Cambon that the British Fleet would protect the northern shores of France, he had held out no hope of sending an army to the Continent. It would, he explained, be needed in Egypt and India.[4] He again expressed his apprehensions at the famous meeting of the War Council of 5 August.[5]

The problem of imperial defence was linked to a second danger, that of offending Muslim opinion in the Empire. The India Office, the Government of India and Kitchener[6] were convinced that Moslems in India and Egypt would

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1 Buchanan to Grey, 5.viii.1914, tel., F.O.371/2162/36298; Minute by Nicolson, 5.viii.1914, F.O.371/2162/36451.
2 Sazanow to Benckendorff, tel., 8.viii.1914, Int.Bez. (Series 2), VI, 13.
3 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 13.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/38796.
4 Cambon to Viviani, tel., 2.viii.1914, D.D.F. (Series 3), XI, 612.
5 CAB.22/1.
6 Asquith to King George V, 17.viii.1914, CAB.41/35.

have grave misgivings about a war with Turkey. It would, they argued, be most hazardous to risk upsetting tens of millions of Moslems. If war with Turkey was indeed inevitable, then the world would have to know that it was she and not Britain and her allies who had willed it. Grey was powerfully influenced by these arguments. When Sir Eyre Crowe, who at that moment was not Grey's favourite civil servant, counselled strong action against Turkey,[1] Grey somewhat petulantly rebuked him:

> "those who consider Mohammedan opinion in India and elsewhere are firmly of the opinion that the first act of war must come from Turkey and not from us."[2]

In August, 1914, the Foreign Office and the India Office hastened to prepare propaganda for Indian consumption in case matters came to an open breach with the Ottoman Empire.[3]

Thus for reasons of imperial security, and in order to ensure that Russia devoted all her energies to the war against Germany, it was essential that Russia should not make war on Turkey.

Grey embarked on a series of diplomatic ploys to frustrate any Russian attempt to extend the war to the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans. He began by refusing to co-operate in the Roumanian negotiations. In part this sprang from a wish not to be involved in the politics of Eastern and Central Europe.[4] But there was also an ulterior motive, that of sabotaging Russian attempts to gain military allies as a preliminary to an attack upon Turkey.

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1 Minute by Crowe, 22.viii.1914, F.O.371/1970/36711.
2 Minute by Grey, undated, c.22.viii.1914, F.O.371/1970/36711.
3 F.O.371/2138/43829.
4 Chapter IV.

Had Grey really wanted to help to bring Roumania into the war, then he could have helped Sazanow in a number of ways; instead he dismissed all idea of assisting Russia to gain Roumania as an ally. When Sazanow reduced his appeals for help to a simple guarantee of Roumanian integrity for the duration of the war, Grey refused even to consider such a step:

> "It does not seem necessary to alter our last instructions .... which really covers the point."[1]

It was a proposal made by the Greek Prime Minister that provided the centrepiece of Grey's opposition to Sazanow. On 10 August, the British Ambassador at Athens reported that Venizelos wanted to reconstitute the Balkan League so that all the Balkan States could come into the war united on the side of the allies.[2] Without consulting Paris or St.Petersburg, Grey gave his full support to the scheme.[3] Superficially his enthusiasm for the Balkan Confederation plan was straightforward: to bring all the Balkan States in on the side of the Triple Entente. In fact the logic was more tortuous. He did not want to bring the Balkan States into the war, but to keep Russia out of the Balkans and to make her concentrate on the war with Germany. Grey made no attempt to make Venizelos' scheme work, and insisted on it only to frustrate Russian diplomacy. We can deduce that this was Grey's real motive from the comments of others. On 21 August, Clerk noted:

> "we are willing to pay a fair price for peace in the Balkans just now ... but I believe that it would be better for us and the world if Turkey threw in her lot with Germany and we devoted our efforts to the Balkan Confederation suggested by M. Venizelos."[4]

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1 Sazanow to Benckendorff, 11.viii.1914 (communicated by Benckendorff), and Minute by Grey, undated, c.11.viii.1914, F.O.371/2164/38095.
2 Erskine to Grey, tel., 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/2164/37861.
3 Grey to Buchanan and Bertie, tel., 11.viii.1914, F.O.371/2164/37861.
4 Minute by Clerk, 21.viii.1914, F.O.371/1900/41470.

This was written some ten days after Grey had instructed Buchanan that:

> "H(is) M(ajesty's) G(overnment) think this project should be encouraged and supported in every way possible and hope that he (Minister for Foreign Affairs) shares this view."[1]

Support for the Balkan Confederation plan did not immediately have the desired effect. Sazanow told Buchanan that the idea was a "chimera". He asked what Britain would do if Greece came to the aid of Serbia were the latter attacked by Turkey or Bulgaria.[2] At a time when everything seemed to hang on battles in France and Belgium, the news that Russia opposed the Balkan Confederation proposal was taken as an ominous sign. Clerk advised:

> "I venture to suggest that M. Sazanow's view as here reported, and what we are told of Russia's attitude towards Turkey shows a dangerous tendency."[3]

That evening (13 August), Nicolson told Benckendorff that Russia should not try to extend the war to Turkey for :

> "it would be unfortunate if efforts to this end (defeating Germany) were diverted to side issues."[4]

Grey warmly approved of the action of his Permanent Under Secretary.[5] Russian assurances that no troops were being held back for a war against Turkey did little to allay British fears.[6] On 15 August, the Foreign Secretary impressed upon the Russian Ambassador:

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1 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 11.viii.1914, F.O.371/2164/37861.
2 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 14.viii.1914, F.O.371/1900/39186.
3 Minute by Clerk, 14.viii.1914, F.O.371/1900/39186.
4 Minute by Nicolson, 14.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/39446.
5 Minute by Grey, undated, c.14.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/39446.
6 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 14.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/39214.

> "how desirable it was not to fasten any quarrel on Turkey during the present war as long as she remained neutral. It would be very embarrassing to us, both in India and in Egypt, if Turkey came out against us."

The war, he argued, would be decided in the forthcoming battles in the North-West of Europe; all allied efforts should be directed towards winning those battles: the Triple Entente should forget about Turkey; they should undertake to respect the neutrality of the Ottoman Empire as long as Turkey remained neutral.[1]

It was against this background of strained Anglo-Russian relations that Grey first raised the question of Constantinople and the Straits. He promised Russia that if she co-operated and Turkey misbehaved, then she could realise her ambitions against Turkey without British opposition. On 13 August, he gave assurances that any Turkish successes would be "wiped out in (the) terms of peace."[2] On 15 August, he told Benckendorff:

> "If Turkey sided with Germany and Austria, and they were defeated then we could not answer for what might be taken from Turkey in Asia Minor."[3]

On the next day, he telegraphed to Constantinople and informed the Porte of the consequences of entering the war:

> "You (Mallet) should make it quite clear that neutrality does mean security for Turkey, but that if Turkey sides against us there are no limits to the loss that she may incur."[4]

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1 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 15.viii.1914, F.O.371/2138/40433.
2 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 13.viii.1914, F.O.371/2171/38796.
3 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 15.viii.1914, F.O.371/2138/40438.
4 Grey to Mallet, tel., 16.viii.1914, F.O.371/2172/40069.

What exactly did Grey mean when he told the Russians that "we could not answer for what might be taken from Turkey in Asia Minor"? That it was an accidental slip may be ruled out, there were three separate references to the same point within the space of four days. Nor was it a statement of British claims, or even a suggestion for the general dismemberment of Turkey. Whatever ambitions Britain had in the Middle East they did not lie in Asia Minor. At this time the term Asia Minor was used quite loosely, but its maximum extent was Anatolia and the northern areas of modern Syria; by no stretch of the imagination would it have included Mesopotamia or any other region where Britain wanted expansion. If Grey had been cynical enough to have been proposing a division of the Ottoman Empire, he would not have been so negligent as to have spoken only of Asia Minor. He was clearly referring to Russian ambitions, and saying that he would not oppose Russian claims against Turkey. Indeed, in referring specifically to Asia Minor he was making this quite clear to the Russians.

What then was Russia being promised? In November, 1914, when a very similar sequence of events prompted a very similar offer, Grey specifically offered Constantinople and the Straits. It would not be unreasonable to assume that this was what he had in mind in August. At about this time (mid-August), Clerk, one of the Foreign Office experts on Turkey, recorded what he thought would be the likely extent of Russian claims:

> "The real difficulty to my mind will be the ultimate fate of Constantinople, we know what Russia will insist on in that respect, and I can only say that if we can contrive to keep the Asiatic side of the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles in the hands of one Power, and the European side in that of another, the difficulty is greatly lessened."[1]

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1 Minute by Clerk, 21.viii.1914, F.O.371/1900/41470.

Both Grey and Sazanow subsequently referred to the promises of August, 1914; though in both cases their "confessions" were of a rather elliptical nature. In his memoirs Sazanow mentioned that even before the outbreak of war with Turkey Russian ambitions had been agreed to; Sazanow neglected to reveal the circumstances whereby this came about.[1] Grey let the story slip in the War Council meeting of 10 March, 1915. Opposition leaders and the Liberals were discussing whether Britain ought to agree to formal Russian demands for Constantinople and the Straits, and the Foreign Secretary alluded to what had happened in typically indirect way: if Britain were to reject Russian demands, then:

> "Russia might claim that the sacrifices she had made in East Prussia in the early days of the war had saved the Allies from defeat."[2]

His thoughts were, no doubt, turning back to August, 1914, when Britain and France had so urgently needed to secure the aid of the Russian armies.

In late August the vision of a Russo-Turkish war receded. However, while the danger diminished it was never far from the surface, and in late September it came to the fore again, and in an even more pernicious form: a Russo-Turkish War in Persia.

For Britain the Anglo-Russian Persian Agreement was in theory a model arrangement. It was contrary to Britain's strategic principles to have common land frontiers with powerful Continental Powers. Spheres of influence protected Britain's interests in the Persian Gulf, while leading

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1 Sazanow, S., Fateful Years, (1928), p.252.
2 CAB.22/1.

to no great extension of military burdens and financial strain. Spheres of influence with a neutral zone had all the advantages of partition with few of the responsibilities. In fact the arrangement did not work well.

The Russians adopted a very unsatisfactory policy towards their "sphere of influence". Russian agents methodically tightened their grip on northern Persia and extended their nation's influence into the neutral zone. Grey found himself caught in a cross-fire of domestic opinion. Imperialists argued that Russian encroachment was a threat to Britain's position in the Persian Gulf; radicals held that 1907 agreement had helped Tsarist autocracy to extend its cruel rule to a people who had long cherished their independence.[1] Yet there was no way of going forward from or back upon the agreement of 1907. Britain had to uphold her interests in Persia in order to secure the Persian Gulf and the safety of the Indian sub-continent. Moreover, the newly acquired interests in the Persian oil fields were of immense economic and strategic importance. Yet, neither the Indian treasury nor Whitehall could afford to foot the bill of partition, and on the eve of war Persia had again become the focus of Anglo-Russian tensions.

At the end of August, 1914, Sazanow expressed his apprehensions about the rising tide of German influence at Teheran. He suggested that the Nejef and Kerbela should be offered to Persia in order to secure her adhesion to the side of the Triple Entente.[2] The proposal was not well received in London. Persia was hardly any use as a military ally; indeed

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1 See in particular the last full-scale debate on foreign policy before the war in Commons, 29.vi.1914, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th Series, vol.LXVIV.

2 Sazanow to Benckendorff, tel., 30.viii.1914, F.O.371/2080/45328.

her assistance would have been a positive liability. It was felt that if there was trouble at Teheran then it was not of Britain's making. For years the Russians had been alienating Persian opinion by their forward policy and their bullying behaviour. As far as the Foreign Office was concerned the Russians could reap what they had sown. Moreover, Persia was a Shiah Power, and it was considered that any transfer of territory to her would strain the loyalty of Moslems in India, who were predominantly Sunni.[1] The Government of India[2] and the India Office[3] had designs on Mesopotamia, and had no intention of allowing Russia to give away territory that would compromise the security of future British possessions.

No sooner had the Russian proposal been digested than reports began to come in of fighting between Turkish and Russian detachments near Azerbaijan.[4] The Persian Government saw an opportunity to turn the tide of Russian encroachment. Persia declared herself to be neutral, and insisted that Russian troops should evacuate her territory.[5] Throughout October there were clashes between Turkish and Russian troops, and the Persians became ever more insistent that foreign troops leave their soil. By the end of October the stage seemed set for a full-scale Russo-Turkish war in Persia. On 30 October, a Turkish flotilla attacked Russia in the Black Sea.

The situation was one of the most acute delicacy and danger. If

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1 Minute by Crowe, 2.ix.1914, F.O.371/2080/45462. Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, tel., 10.ix.1914, F.O.371/2080/58551.
2 Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, tel., 10.ix.1914, F.O.371/2080/58551.
3 India Office to Foreign Office, 12.ix.1914; F.O.371/2080/49001.
4 F.O.371/2080/46559.
5 F.O.371/2080/56208; F.O.371/2080/57458.

Russia were to turn her energies to a conflict in Persia against Turkey, she would have little to spare for the war against Germany. Were she successful in grabbing Persian and Turkish territory, she might become satisfied with the fruits of war and contemplate peace. A peace which would leave her with a commanding position in the Middle East. Even were Russia not successful, she might succeed in driving Persia into the hands of Turkey and Germany. This would have a most disturbing effect on Muslim opinion in India. Thus it was vital for Britain to ensure that Russia did not mount a campaign against Turkey through Persia.

It is hard to weight precisely the relative importance of each of these fears in the overall desire to keep Russia out of Persia. The Foreign Office was geminely concerned about opinion in India and those in England who would draw uncomfortable parallels between the German violation of Belgium neutrality and a Russian violation of the neutrality of Persia.[1] However, it would seem that the main concern was with Britain's position in the Persian Gulf, and the need to prevent Russian ascendency in that area. Grey found it easier and more tactful to play on sentiments in India and at home when explaining British apprehensions to Russia. On one occasion Clerk advised:

> "we should use the argument of opinion here and in India as sparingly as possible, it makes the Russians suspicious, and if we always bring it out it loses weight."[2]

Of Britain's determination to keep Russia out of Persia there was no doubt.

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1 F.O.371/2080/76008.
2 Minute by Clerk, 25.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/74916.

If the Russians tried to mount a war in Persia, then:

> "it will lead to an open quarrel between Russia and H(is) M(ajesty's) G(overnment)."[1]

Grey's position was quite extraordinarily difficult. He could not simply appeal for Russian moderation, Russia had been attacked by Turkey, and she was entitled to protect herself. The Foreign Secretary went back to the idea of buying Russian co-operation with offer of Constantinople and the Straits.

On 1 November, Grey telegraphed to Buchanan and instructed him to:

> "earnestly impress upon (the) M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs) that the inevitable war with Turkey may be a strain on Mohammedan opinion in India and Egypt. It is therefore essential that the Russian Government should do all in their power to ease the strain and help us to conciliate Mussulman opinion by being most friendly to Persia and avoid(ing) all harshness there. .....M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs) should realise the necessity of impressing on all Russian personnel in Persia that a conciliatory and friendly attitude there is essential. There may be no limit to the embarrassment and weakening of our hands that may be caused unless the war with Turkey is set off by (a) benevolent attitude in Persia."

In return Russia could realise her own claims against Turkey without British opposition:

> "Turkey has shown herself incorrigible and impossible, and deserves and should receive no consideration .... we give up all plea for consideration as far as Turkey is concerned."[2]

On 2 November, the Cabinet met. The culminative effects of Turkey's

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1 Minute by Clerk, 29.xii.1914, F.O.371/2080/87677.
2 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 1.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/65815.

hesitating diplomacy had broken the last threads of British sympathy towards her. Churchill had set his heart on using the offer of Turkish territory as a bait to bring the Balkan States into the war.[1] Kitchener considered that Turkey had behaved "so disgracefully that ... we should not forget after the war is over."[2] His ambitions may have already been turning towards dreams of a land-route from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.[3] Lord Crewe wanted to absorb Mesopotamia into the British Empire.[4] Lloyd George hated the Turks with all the fire of his high-minded, Low Church background.[5] There were negotiations with the Arabs to obtain their moral and material support in the conflict with their Ottoman masters. Asquith reported to the King:

> "henceforward Great Britain must finally abandon the formula of 'Ottoman Integrity' whether in Europe or in Asia."[6]

The way was open for even further concessions to Russia.

The Russian Government, far from drawing back from Persia, seemed firm in their resolve to fight their Turkish war on her territory. On 2 November, Sazanow explained to the British Ambassador that he would do all he could to fall in with Grey's wishes, but that:

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1 Churchill to Grey, 23.ix.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88.
2 Kitchener notes, undated, c.mid-September, 1914; these notes are made on 10 Downing Street letter paper, so they were probably made at a Cabinet meeting, possibly that of 23.ix.1914 when the Cabinet discussed the question of Turkey in some detail, Grey Papers, F.O.800/88.
3 Jukka Nevakiva's, Lord Kitchener and the Partition of the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916, published in Studies in International History (1967), edited by Bourne, K., and Watt, D.C., pp.316-329, is a precise and sensitive study of Kitchener's attitudes.
4 India Office to the Foreign Office, 12.ix.1914, F.O.371/2080/49001.
5 Memorandum by C.P.Scott, 27.xi.1914, Scott Papers, add.50901.
6 Asquith to King George V, 3.ix.1914, CAB.41/35.

> "Turkey would almost certainly attack Russia on the flank through Azerbaijan, and in protecting herself on that side she would also be protecting Persia from aggression."

Buchanan was so alarmed that he warned Sazanow not to try to dismember Persia.[1] At the same time (2 November), Benckendorff informed the Foreign Office that Russia was being obliged to strengthen her forces in Persia.[2] Shortly afterwards it was reported from St.Petersburg that Turkey was sending 20,000 troops to attack Russia through Persia.[3] On 10 November, Grey found himself obliged to warn Russia not to try to dismember Persia.[4]

Some dramatic gesture was needed if Russia was to be dissuaded from invading Persia. This time Grey decided to make her a firm offer of Constantinople and the Straits. He sent a long telegram to St.Petersburg. He emphasised the need for the Entente to devote its efforts to defeating Germany, and explained that opinion in England might view Russian aggression against Persia in the same light as German aggression against Belgium. Furthermore, if Russia insisted on carrying the war into Persia, Britain would be obliged to secure her own interests and reinforce her garrisons in the Middle East. Such a course could only impede the allied war effort in Europe. On the latter point Grey was not bluffing, and had Kitchener's sanction before he sent the telegram. Having stated these disagreeable alternatives, Grey proposed a modus vivendi; if Russia would not violate Persian neutrality and would concentrate on the war against Germany; then

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1 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 2.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/66330.
2 Sazanow to Benckendorff, tel., 31.x.1914, (communicated by Benckendorff), F.O.371/2080/66390.
3 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 12.xi.1914, F.O.371/2171/69994.
4 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 10.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/69647.

"I should like the M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs) to know that however much we may assume a defensive attitude in the war with Turkey .... we regard the conduct of the Turkish Government as having made a complete settlement of the Turkish question including that of the Straits and Constantinople in agreement with Russia inevitable. It will of course be effected after Germany is defeated and whether or not Turkish rule is overthrown in the course of present hostilities."[1]

On 13 November, King George V told the Russian Ambassador that Russia must have Constantinople at the end of the war.[2] The King's promise was more categorical and less qualified than Grey's had been. There is no obvious reason for this discrepancy. It could have been that the King, who possessed a rather frank and direct nature, simplified what Grey or Asquith told him to say. The more likely explanation is that Grey, who was in no position to give a binding pledge to the Russians, tried to use the cordial relations between the King and the Czar as a means of adding weight to his promises.

Grey's policy had the desired effect, and the Russians agreed not to precipitate a conflict in Persia.

In certain respects it can be observed that British policy towards Russia was very similar to policy towards Germany. Both Powers were felt to be irresponsible and autocratic; in both cases Britain evolved a policy that consisted of pushing them away from areas where they directly threatened British interests; in both cases these interests were seen to lie in

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1 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 12.xi.1914, F.O.371/2080/70280; Int.Bez. (Series 2) VI, 507.
2 Int.Bez. (Series 2) VI, 506.

strategic needs. Germany was to be driven from the West of Europe, and Russia diverted from Persia and the East.

Policy towards the post-war settlement was working itself out within the existing framework of foreign policy. Neither in the manner in which it evolved, nor in the institutions which evolved it, had the problem of the peace settlement been considered as something that lay outside the scope of the day-to-day conduct of foreign affairs. This caused, at least to some extent, a failure to grasp the need for stable foundations for the peace settlement. Those who were devising British war aims were giving little thought to military and economic developments which made nonsense of the vision of security on which their policy was predicated. In trying to turn German and Russian ambitions to the east and centre of Europe, they were creating tensions which in the long run the British Empire was not capable of containing.

5. <u>November, 1914, to February, 1915</u>.

Grey succeeded in turning Russian ambitions away from Persia. Unfortunately there was another side to the Russian problem. Russian war aims were directed not so much towards Turkey as towards Austria-Hungary and Germany. After a discussion of war aims with the Russian Foreign Minister in September, 1914, Buchanan reported grandiose Russian ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe. On the question of Constantinople and the Straits, Sazanow had only:

> "alluded vaguely to the necessity of regulating the question of the Straits in a manner satisfactory to Russia and Roumania."[1]

In a long statement of war aims, made in November, 1914, the Czar elaborated vast schemes for re-organisation in Europe, and asked for no more than an internationalisation of Constantinople.[2] Grey had been hustled into a rather awkward position: he had made promises to Russia in Turkey where her ambitions were limited; he had made no promises as regards Europe, where the Russian appetite was enormous.

This contradiction was the more blatant because of Russia's poor showing in her war against Germany. Kitchener felt that Russia was being thrown back on the defensive,[3] and Field Marshall French told Bertie that:

> "he did not contemplate the possibility ... of Russian troops getting to Berlin."[4]

At the same time the pattern of the war on the Western Front was becoming equally gloomy and obvious; territory could only be won back at the most terrible cost in blood and treasure. Hankey told Grey that to believe the Germans could be driven out of France was to believe in a "fools paradise", and was "hoping for the impossible".[5] Britain and France could hardly be expected to fight on to realize Russian claims against Austria-Hungary and Germany.

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1 Buchanan to Nicolson, 13.ix.1914, Carnock Papers, F.O.800/375. There is no doubt that Grey read this despatch, for he wrote in his own hand the names of the ministers to whom it was to be circulated.
2 Paléologue, vol.I, pp.178, 187-198; Buchanan to Grey, 23.xi.1914, F.O.371/2174/74460; tel. from Bordeaux, 2.xii.194, F.O.371/2174/71999.
3 Memorandum by Bertie, 21.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 21.i.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/167.
5 Hankey to Grey, 21.i.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/90.

The problem was clear: to find Russia some compensation in the peace settlement which did not involve too much effort on Britain's part. The answer was equally obvious: to substitute claims in Turkey for her war aims in Europe. Grey set about persuading Russia to look upon Constantinople and the Straits as her reward for her sacrifices in the war: he persistently and gratuitously reaffirmed his promises of August and November, 1914.

In January, 1915, there were rumours that the Government of Enver Pasha would be overthrown and a pro-Entente faction would seize control. Grey made no attempt to make a negotiated settlement with Turkey any easier by paring down Russian claims. He did the reverse, and instructed Buchanan to inform Sazanow:

> "there are rumours of trouble at Constantinople which may result in the overthrow of Enver and pro-German policy. This is much to be desired, but whatever changes take place there or whatever happens during the war all I said to (the) M(inister) (for) F(oreign) A(ffairs) about the settlement as regards Constantinople and the Straits at the end of the war holds good as far as we are concerned."[I]

In February, 1915, the Foreign Secretary again reaffirmed his promises to the Russians. Shortly before the Fleet began its bombardment of the Dardanelles' forts, the Commander of the Ist Turkish Army Corps at Constantinople started negotiations with the British Government through Greek intermediaries. He offered to stage a <u>coup d'état</u> at the moment

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I Grey to Buchanan, tel., 14.1.1915, F.O.371/2506/4867.

the bombardment began. His conditions were that the Entente would recognise his régime and would promise that Turkey suffered "no discrimination or penalty."[1] Nicolson felt that the offer should not be passed over, because liquidation of the Ottoman Empire would prove a "stremuous task".[2] However, Grey informed the Russians:

> "I should not propose to negotiate any conditions which would impair or qualify what I said to (the) M(inister) for F(oreign) A(ffairs) about the Straits and Constantinople after Turkey attacked Russia in October."[3]

There are three points that ought to be noted about these telegrams. Firstly, Grey himself was opposed to Britain extending her Empire at the expense of Turkey.[4] His object in insisting on Russian claims could not have been to further British ambitions. Secondly, in January and February, 1915, Russian demands were only for an internationalisation of Constantinople and for free access to the Mediterranean. Had Grey wanted to limit Russian gains, he would have tried to find some compromise formula which would have satisfied the Russians and the Turkish opposition party. Instead, he wrote Russia a blank cheque as regards Constantinople and the Straits. Thirdly, at the time these assurances were given plans for the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts were well under way. Given that this attack was a naval one, a "fifth column" at Constantinople was just what was needed. From the military point there was every reason for encouraging the Turkish

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1 Elliot to Grey, tel., 8.ii.1915, F.O.371/2479/14967; Elliot to Grey, tel., 9.ii.1915, F.O.371/2479/15471.
2 Minute by Nicolson, 9.ii.1915, F.O.371/2479/14967.
3 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 10.ii.1915, F.O.371/2479/14967. This telegram was drafted by Nicolson and Grey specifically altered the sense of Nicolson's first draft and included the paragraph quoted.
4 War Council Meeting, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1; Asquith, vol.II, p.69.

opposition by keeping Russian demands down to a minimum. The Foreign Secretary must therefore have had some very good reason for encouraging Russian claims.

If one looks closely at the wording of Grey's messages, it can be seen that he was not offering Constantinople and the Straits gratis. In early November his promises had been carefully qualified. It was specifically stated that Russian claims in Turkey were to be realized only "after Germany had been defeated". In January, 1915, he withdrew this stipulation, and stated:

> "Whatever happens in the war all I said to the M(inister) for F(oreign) A(ffairs) ..... holds good as far as we are concerned."

This unqualified undertaking was double-edged; while it promised Russia Constantinople, it no longer promised the defeat of Germany. The strong implication was Russia should not expect Britain to fight on until Russia had realised her ambition in Europe, but "whatever happened" Russia would receive Constantinople.

It is from a conversation Grey had with Colonel House, early in February, 1915, that we know that Grey was trying to replace Russian war aims in Europe with war aims in Turkey. The two men discussed the peace settlement and:

> "He (Grey) thought Russia might be satisfied with Constantinople and we (House and Grey) discussed that in some detail."[1]

This was a month before Russia had claimed Constantinople, and at a time

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1 House to Wilson, 9.ii.1915, House, Vol.I, p.369.

when her claims went no further than internationalisation.

6. Constantinople in Grey's Plan for the Settlement in Europe.

The Russian acquisition of Constantinople and the Straits was one part of a general plan for the settlement in Europe. The plan involved inflicting a defeat on Germany sufficiently severe that it would precipitate the overthrow of the German military party; the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France; the evacuation and indemnity of Belgium; the compensation of Russia in Turkey. This peace was to be negotiated through American mediation.

The history of this plan falls into two parts. Between the middle of November, 1914, and the middle of January, 1915, Grey was toying with the idea of a settlement on these lines. After the decision to mount a naval attack on the Dardanelles, Grey saw that the plan had become a very real possibility. He set about preparing the way for it by persuading Russia to accept Constantinople and the Straits instead of gains in Europe.

In the first two months of the war Grey had dismissed any idea of American mediation. In September, 1914, he wrote:

> "Mediation can only become practical on the basis of some terms of peace: it is no use to talk of mediation apart from terms. If the U.S.Government has anything to put forward, the allies can consider it. Till then there is nothing to consider."[1]

By the end of November, 1914, military deadlock and optimistic statements from Wilson[2] had caused Grey to take a more mellow view of

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.10.ix.1914, F.O.371/2174/48240.
2 Despatches from Spring-Rice, Grey Papers, F.O.800/84.

American mediation. When Bertie wrote complaining that Wilson might try to act as a mediator,[1] Grey replied:

> "Personally I do not exclude all idea of United States mediation; but if Germany told the United States that she wanted peace and asked the President Wilson to approach us, the question of whether we should decline to negotiate or not would be one which the Allies must discuss together before any of us could answer it."[2]

He expressed very similar sentiments to the Russians.[3]

In fact the Foreign Secretary was not quite so scrupulous. By the end of December he was discussing the basis of the territorial settlement in Europe with the Americans. When, at the very end of 1914, there were rumours that Germany might be willing to make peace, Chandler P. Anderson, a Secretary at the United States Embassy, was called to the Foreign Office. Anderson was about to return home, and Grey gave him a verbal message as to the terms of peace of the Entente Powers: the evacuation and compensation of Belgium; the restoration of the Lost Provinces to France; Russian possession of Constantinople and the Straits.[4] Later, in February 1915, the Foreign Secretary told House much the same.[5] Substituting Russian war aims in Europe for war aims in Turkey was a necessary end, and an integral part of a scheme to negotiate peace through American mediation.

In both conversations with American envoys Grey refrained from committing himself in writing. This was in order to avoid friction with

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1 Bertie to Grey, 27.xi.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
2 Grey to Bertie, 4.xii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/166.
3 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 12.i.1915, F.O.371/2506/2188.
4 Link, A., Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality (1960), pp.212-213.
5 House to Wilson, 9.ii.1915, House, vol.I, p.369.

his allies. The French and the Russians had no idea that Grey was discussing the general basis of the peace settlement with the United States, and he made no attempt to enlighten them.

The way in which Grey conducted these negotiations with the United States is reminiscent of the Kühlmann affair.[1] In both cases Tyrrell was an important (and perhaps decisive) influence. Tyrrell had met House and Wilson in the Winter of 1913-1914 when he had gone to Washington. For a short time, when Spring-Rice the Ambassador, was ill, he had been in charge of the Washington Embassy.[2] He had made an excellent impression on House and Wilson, and thereafter enjoyed the most cordial relations with House. During the war, and in spite of his decline, Grey used Tyrrell in his negotiations with House.[3] The parallels between the two negotiations goes deeper. In both cases there are in the British archives no records of what had passed; the story can only be pieced together from foreign sources. Just as the Foreign Office archives and the Grey Papers contain no substantial record of Tyrrell's conversations with Kühlmann, so they contain no record of the verbal message given to Anderson, or to the Grey-House-Tyrrell conversations of February, 1915.

One can notice the same subtlety and deviousness in Grey's diplomacy as in his relations with Cabinet. This suggests that the accepted image of Grey as being a simple-minded and straightforward statesman needs to be modified. His policy and his character were a good deal more complex than this view would lead us to believe.

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1 Chapter II.
2 Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol.I, pp.204-207.
3 Intimate Papers of Colonel House, vol.I, p.374.

7. Diplomacy, Strategy and the Dardanelles.

There are two questions that may be asked about the relationship between the strategy of the Dardanelles and the diplomacy of Constantinople. Firstly: were Grey's colleagues aware that the Dardanelles operations, if successful, would have meant Constantinople being handed over to the Russians? Secondly: to what extent did political needs influence strategic policy?

All the leading members of Asquith's Government knew that Russia was to have Constantinople at the end of the war, and they were aware of it before the decision was made to mount an attack on the Dardanelles. There are no Cabinet minutes for this period, but one can piece together what other ministers were told from the names on the circulation lists for Foreign Office documents.[1] What is in doubt is whether other ministers grasped how important Russian acquisition of Constantinople was to Grey's plan for the territorial settlement in Europe. Here the documentary evidence is too slight to pass a definitive judgement.

The second question is more complex, and certain general points should be noted. The decision to mount an attack on the Dardanelles was not made for any single reason, it flowed from a complex of motives. Churchill's reasons for thinking of the plan were different from Grey's reasons for supporting it. Moreover, the key men in the linking process between the various departments of State - Tyrrell and Hankey - have left sparse records of their dealings: it is difficult therefore to see how the various and

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1 See names on circulation list on certain Foreign Office files, e.g. F.O.371/2030/70280; F.O.371/2506/7274.

several motives slotted together. One can only say that a motive existed, one cannot determine precisely how significant a single motive was in the overall decision.

There is a certain amount of documentary evidence which indicates that one reason for the Dardanelles campaign was to gain territory to give to Russia. The point is made obliquely in the report of the Dardanelles Commission. This body met in 1916, and its purpose was to look into the reasons for the Dardanelles and Gallipoli fiascos. The Commission's report is vague and evasive on the question of the political motives behind the campaign. It was argued (as in these cases it always is) that it would not be in the national interest to disclose such matters. However, on page 19 of their report we find the statement that the operations:

> "would have gone far to settle a question which has been a constant source of trouble in Europe for centuries past."[1]

There is neither reference nor further elaboration on the point. Marxist historians[2] have interpreted this to mean that Britain sought to block Russian access to the Mediterranean by seizing Constantinople. They are right in believing that the reference is to the question of Constantinople and the Straits: there is nothing else it could have meant. They are quite wrong in thinking that Britain sought to block Russian access: the statement could only have meant the exact opposite.

Taking the broad view of political and strategic plans one point

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1 Dardanelles Commission, First Report, p.19.
2 e.g. Gottlieb, pp.86-87.

emerges very forcibly: Grey began to encourage Russia to look to Turkey for her compensation for her sacrifices in the war at just the moment when Churchill's plan was being accepted. This implies, as does the statement in the report of the Dardanelles' Commission, that political and military considerations helped each other to take shape. Such a conclusion is confirmed by the story that can be pieced together of relations between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty in the first fortnight of 1915.

The idea of an attack on the Dardanelles was in circulation from the very beginning of the war in Europe. Even before the entry of Turkey into the war there were references to the Fleet trying to force the Dardanelles. On 25 November the question was raised in the War Council. In late 1914 Fisher and Hankey devised a scheme for an attack on Constantinople, and on 3 January, 1915, Fisher presented Churchill with their plan for an attack on Constantinople: old battleships, aided by landings of Indian and Greek troops, would try to force the Dardanelles.[1] Fisher's plan came to the attention of the Foreign Office and, on 12 January, Tyrrell went to see Fisher. The day after their interview Fisher wrote to Tyrrell. Fisher's letter is worth noting. It throws a light on the activities of Grey's most intimate adviser in the days when the crucial decisions about the Dardanelles were being made, and, incidentally, it tells us a good deal about the Fisher-Churchill controversy. Fisher outlines his objections to Churchill's plan for the Fleet to force the Dardanelles without military assistance. The letter is written in Fisher's usual highly amusing and eccentric style:

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1 Hankey, Vol.I, p.253.

"In view of your most valued talk of yesterday, if the Greeks land 100,000 men on the Gallipoli Peninsula in concert with a British naval attack on the Dardanelles I think we could count on an easy and quick arrival at Constantinople. A naval approach without any troops ... would involve loss of ships and expenditure of ammunition and a weakening of the Heavy Guns of the Fleet beyond approval and when the remains of the Fleet got to Constantinople it could do nothing but carry out a futile massacre a la Bombardment of Alexandria! (I participated). The real people to fight with us for Constantinople are the Bulgarians. (One Bulgar worth a thousand Greeks!) But make no mistake about the war, My dear Tyrrell. The German objective was never Paris or Warsaw. It was Antwerp!! and they've got it! and the moment peace is now alleged as Germany so much desires - then Germany having Antwerp will annex Holland."[1]

From Fisher's letter it is possible to form some picture of what Tyrrell had said on the previous day. He had mentioned to Fisher the rumours that Germany might be willing to make peace and restore Belgium, and had quizzed him about his scheme for an attack on the Dardanelles. These two topics had been somehow connected in their talk, for in his letter Fisher runs these two themes together. How were they connected? Writing a few days earlier, Asquith had noted that if Germany offered to restore Belgium this would be a welcome solution for Britain, but had added rather gloomily that this would not satisfy France and Russia.[2] On 11 January, the day before Tyrrell saw Fisher, Grey had telegraphed to his ambassadors at St.Petersburg, Paris and Tokio,

"(The) German Embassy has lately given (the) impression at Washington that they would like peace and would agree

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1 Fisher to Tyrell, 13.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/107.
2 Asquith, vol.II, pp.50-51.

> to evacuate and compensate Belgium ... You should inform (the) Minister for Foreign Affairs privately and confidentially and say I should be very glad at any time to have his views of what line should be taken if we were seriously approached."[1]

It can be taken that when Tyrrell saw Fisher on 12 January he had on his mind the question of what terms would satisfy France and Russia. From Fisher's letter it can be deduced that what Tyrrell suggested was that German ambitions had been frustrated and she might soon be willing to make peace. However, some compensation would have to be found for Russia. What therefore were the chances of successfully implementing Fisher's scheme for a Dardanelles expedition? Now the connecting link is obvious, using the Dardanelles operations to grab territory to satisfy Russia. Fisher, having said his scheme would work, went on to warn Tyrrell against his general ideas, "But make no mistake about the war. My dear Tyrrell."

Such a scheme is just what Tyrrell would have thought of. Harold Nicolson described Grey's Private Secretary as having "believed in personal relations," and "the conversations of Sir William Tyrrell were intangible but suggestive," he "excelled in examining the outer radius of international problems."[2] We know that in early February (the House conversations) Grey was intent on using the Dardanelles operations to gain a prize to offer Russia. It is not at all unreasonable to assume that this had occurred to Tyrrell even before those operations were agreed on. If this

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1 Grey to Buchanan, Bertie and Greene, tel., 11.1.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/75.
2 Nicolson, p.328.

was the case, then the political plans did, at least to some degree, influence the decision to mount a naval attack on the Dardanelles. Grey and Tyrrell, who had no great interest in military planning, merely switched their backing from Fisher's original scheme to Churchill's.

8. The Negotiations of March, 1915.

The Straits Agreement of March, 1915, is of quite singular interest from two points of view. In the first place, it came about as a result of an almost perverse series of misunderstandings. The chain of events, ideas and perceptions is of significance to this narrative. In the second place, it is an excellent example of a certain type of international crisis: one which draws its force from an atmosphere of universal fear and suspicion. This mood undermined confidence like a run on a bank. In the end mutual trust could only be restored by showing absolute good faith and meeting the totality of the demands of the claimants.

In January and February, 1915, opinion in the Duma was running strongly in favour of Russia acquiring Constantinople and the Straits at the end of the war. On 9 February, Sazanow, in a speech to the Duma, spoke of solving the problems of Russia's access to the Mediterranean.

There was nothing in Sazanow's speech that was surprising in view of what had already passed between London and St.Petersburg, and Buchanan did not even bother to report it. The speech was quoted in the Times and a question was tabled in the House of Commons about it.[1] In wartime it was

1 F.O.371/2479/24058.

quite easy to persuade M.P.s to withdraw questions, and had the Foreign Secretary wanted to, he could have avoided answering it.[1] Instead, Grey thought he would use the opportunity to indicate the new direction of his policy.[2] He consulted with Asquith[3] and the Russian Ambassador,[4] and they approved Grey's statement to the Commons before it was made. The Commons were told:

> "This aspiration (Sazanow's statement to the Duma) is an aspiration with which we are in entire sympathy. The precise form in which it will be realised will no doubt be settled in the terms of peace."[5]

Grey's pronouncement virtually coincided with the opening of the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts. By a curious irony it was misquoted in the Russian press. The misreporting of Grey's statement, coupled as it was with the appearance of the Fleet at Constantinople, created a most unfortunate impression in Russia; it seemed that Britain was trying to check Russian ambitions. Why, the Russians asked themselves, was Britain fighting at Constantinople when Russia was so hard pressed elsewhere? British policy seemed the plainest of hypocrisy; all the fine promises of goodwill had been nothing but a mask for the most treacherous duplicity. While Russia was locked in a death-struggle with Germany, Austria and Turkey, Britain was gobbling up the prizes of war.

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1 Chapter I.
2 Grey to Benckendorff, 2.iii.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/75.
3 Asquith's initials, undated, c.24.ii.1914, F.O.371/2479/24021.
4 Grey to Benckendorff, 2.iii.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/75.
5 F.O.371/2479/24058.

The Foreign Secretary found himself in a not altogether unfamiliar situation. The diplomatic system was so ridden with half-truths, that at moments of acute tension suspicions multiplied like bacteria, and undermined the credit of good intentions. The Czar was annoyed with Britain; Sazanow faced a storm of protest in the Duma. Grey was asked to make a further public statement on British policy towards Constantinople; a statement that was to indicate a positive sympathy and support for Russian claims.[1]

An unqualified public statement was just what Grey could not give. The question of whether Britain wanted Russia to have Constantinople was not the point at issue. The difficulty lay in convincing public opinion at home. Clerk wrote:

> "the moment Russia's imagination seizes on Stanboul as Russia's reward for her sacrifices, it seems to me that we can only acquiesce."[2]

Nicolson was of the same opinion; the difficulty lay in giving the public statement Russia demanded:

> "We know very well Russia will have Constantinople ... the Government will no doubt decide whether public opinion in this country is ripe for so categorical a statement as M.Sazanow asks .... whether a public notification on our part to that effect is opportune or wise the Secretary of State alone can decide."[3]

Asquith did not want any public statement. He feared that public opinion was not ready for such a dramatic reversal of traditional policy.[4]

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1 Buchanan to Grey, 1.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/24058.
2 Minute by Clerk, 2.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/24058.
3 Minute by Nicolson, 2.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/24058.
4 Meeting of War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.

Grey hoped he would be able to ride out the storm by soothing the Russians. He instructed Buchanan to reassure Sazanow,[1] and appealed to Benckendorff to enlighten his Government as to the true circumstances surrounding his statement in the Commons. His letter to Benckendorff is interesting both for its contents, and in showing Grey's disarmingly straightforward and simple processes of reasoning and persuasion:

> "I am more disappointed than I can express to hear from Sazanow that my statement in the House of Commons about the Straits has been unfavourably received in Russia. I wish I had said nothing at all. I have telegraphed to Buchanan to explain that I cannot be more Russian than the Russian Government in my public utterances. I have not told Buchanan that I had shown you the answer before I gave it, but I should be very pleased if you could telegraph something to Sazanow to explain how the answer came to be given and what I said to you as to my desire to say in public what I said to Sazanow in private; and if you could explain this to the Emperor it would be very useful, for I hear he is upset."[2]

But the situation was already out of control; the pace of events was now being set at St.Petersburg and not at London. Delcassé asked Iswolsky (now Russian Ambassador at Paris) what settlement Russia desired as regards the Straits and Constantinople. On 2 March, Benckendorff presented the Foreign Office with Sazanow's provisional statement. Russia claimed access to the Mediterranean and a guarantee of the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara.[3] This communication was immediately circulated to the

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1 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 2.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/24058.
2 Grey to Benckendorff, 2.iii.1915, (copy), Grey Papers, F.O.800/75.
3 Minute by Nicolson, 2.iii.1915, and Memorandum by Benckendorff, 2.iii.1915, F.O.371/2449/25014.

Cabinet,[1] and Bertie was instructed to ascertain the views of the French Government.[2] Before anything could be decided Russia had come forward with a completely new set of demands.

On 3 March, the Czar informed Paléologue that the question of Constantinople needed clearing up.[3] On the following day (4 March), the French and British Ambassadors were presented with an Aide-Memoire which listed Russia's official claims. The Russians dropped their demand for a public statement and asked instead for secret agreement to the terms of their Aide-Memoire. The French and British Governments could then, in their own time and their own way, educate their peoples as to the new realities. Russia asked for the question of Constantinople and the Straits to be settled in accordance with her traditional aspirations. The precise interpretation of which was that Russia should receive Constantinople, the Western shore of the Bosphorous, the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, Southern Thrace as far as the Enos-Midia line, and certain extensions of territory necessary for the protection of these areas. In return, the special interests of Britain and France at Constantinople would be scrupulously upheld, and British and French claims for expansion at the expense of Turkey would be received sympathetically.[4]

The Foreign Office saw no point in holding out against Russian demands. Clerk and Nicolson felt that the best policy would be to secure Britain's financial and trading interests at Constantinople, and ensure that there was free navigation of the Straits.[5] While Grey and his advisers were willing

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1 Minute by Grey, undated, c.2.iii.1915, F.O.371/2499/25014.
2 Grey to Bertie, tel., 3.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/24602.
3 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 4.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/25969.
4 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 4.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/25969.
5 Minute by Clerk, 5.iii.1915, Minute by Nicolson, 6.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/26072.

to agree to Russian demands, it was fear of France that encouraged the very hasty acceptance of the terms of the Russian Aide-Memoire.

In the week following the presentation of Russian demands, an almost comic confusion arose between Paris and London. The Foreign Office suspected that the French were trying to put Britain in a position where they could represent to the Russians that Britain was opposing her claims. The French hoped to check Russian ambitions and to lay the blame upon Britain. The basis of the Foreign Office's suspicions lay partly in the untrustworthy character of the French Ambassador at St.Petersburg, and partly in the knowledge that Delcassé was against making concessions to the Russians.[1] When Bertie was unable to obtain any statement from the French Government about their reaction to Sazanow's provisional list of Russian claims,[2] it seemed likely that the Quai d'Orsay was keeping mute in the hope that Grey would raise objections. The French would then go to the Russians and say that as Britain was opposed there was no point in pressing their demands.

On receipt of the Russian Aide-Memoire, Grey, Clerk and Nicolson discussed what was to be done. Clerk advised that they should play the game as the French were playing it: they would not inform Bertie of the terms of the Aide-Memoire, nor would they tell him their own views. The Ambassador would be able to ascertain the views of the French Government without giving away Britain's position.[3] Unfortunately, the French

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1 Bertie to Grey, 22.xi.1914, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177. Paléologue was notorious as a trouble maker, e.g. Buchanan to Grey, 15.xi.1914, F.O.371/2174/71776; Buchanan to Grey, tel., 23.xi.1914, F.O.371/2174/74460.

2 F.O.371/2479/24659.

3 Minute by Clerk, 14.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.

pursued a very similar policy, and Cambon was not informed of the terms of the Aide-Memoire either.[1] On 7 March, Nicolson noted with some apprehension that:

> "Delcassé's reticence is curious. So far as I know M.Cambon has received nothing from Paris as to Russian demands and is ignorant of them."[2]

As neither the British Ambassador in Paris nor the French Ambassador in London were in a position to discuss the matter, a common Anglo-French policy was impossible.

Grey, already in Sazanow's bad books because of his speech in the House of Commons, was determined not to be outmanoeuvred. On 6 March, he cautioned Buchanan about saying anything until he had received formal instructions.[3] The news that France had accepted Russian demands in principle, but was hedging in fact, convinced the Foreign Secretary of the urgent need to secure Britain's position by accepting Russian demands.[4] Grey later explained to Bertie:

> "If we had opposed Russia the French would have laid upon us at Petrograd the responsibility for opposition, as it is they lay upon us at Paris the responsibility for concession. The latter is preferable."[5]

On 9 March, Russian demands were brought before the Cabinet.[6] Neither Kitchener, nor Churchill, nor Hankey[7] saw any strategic objections to

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 16.iii.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/167.
2 Minute by Nicolson, 7.iii.1915, F.O.371/2449/26533.
3 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 6.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/26072.
4 Buchanan to Grey, tel., 8.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/27177.
5 Minute by Grey, undated, c.28.iii.1915, on the bottom of Bertie to Grey, 25.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.
6 Asquith to King George V, 9.iii.1915, CAB.41/36.
7 Hankey to Balfour, 10.iii.1915, Balfour Papers, add.49703.

agreeing to Russian demands. Asquith noted that:

> "Russia's claim irresistible - no English or French interest against."[1]

The larger part of the Cabinet's time was taken up with a discussion of that part of the Russian Aide-Memoire which offered to consider sympathetically British ambitions in Asiatic Turkey. Since agreement to Russian demands would constitute a binding pledge, and as it constituted an abandonment of concepts long cherished in England, Asquith felt that it would be wise to consult the leaders of the Opposition. Bonar Law and Lansdowne were invited to the War Council meeting of the following day.[2] Balfour, who had a regular seat, was also present.

For the benefit of the Unionist leaders Grey painted a simple and rather distorted picture of the Straits question since the beginning of the war. He vaguely alluded to the promises of August and November, 1914, but neglected to mention that the initiative for these promises had been British and not Russian. He played heavily on reports that Russia might leave the war, and that emphasised some gesture was needed to keep up her morale and her interest in the conflict. It was a very impressive and persuasive little speech. He made everything sound straightforward and omitted anything that was likely to cause controversy. It was agreed that Britain should agree to Russian demands on certain conditions. Constantinople was to be a trade entrepôt and there was to be full freedom of the Straits for commercial

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1 Notes by Asquith, undated, Asquith Papers, MS.114. These notes were made either during the Cabinet Meeting of 9 March or the War Council meeting of 10 March.

2 Asquith to King George V, 9.111.1915, CAB.41/36.

vessels. Russia was to consider favourably any British claims that might be formulated with regard to the Ottoman Empire. Russia was to re-negotiate the Anglo-Russian Persian Agreement and Britain was to have the neutral zone. Russian aims were to be realised only after the war had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.[1]

The substance of the various British counter-claims is in itself an enormous subject, and is too heavy and complex to be considered here. The question of British desiderata in Turkey and in Asia was examined at length by an Inter-Departmental Committee which met in the Spring of 1915. The Committee was headed by Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the former British Ambassador at Vienna. The Committee came out in favour of a federated Turkey.[2] The re-negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Asiatic Agreements was debated at some length between the various departments of State. These discussions proceeded at a very leisurely pace, and at one stage correspondence between the Foreign Office and the India Office was held up for a month until it was discovered that an unanswered letter had been mislaid.[3] By July, 1915, it was realized that it was too late for the De Bunsen Committee to consider the matter, and it was suggested that a further committee be established to look into that issue.[4] But nothing seems to have been done about this, and thereafter it was always pleaded that the situation was too unstable to come to any definite decisions.

The smaller and more pressing question of the nature of safeguards for British rights at Constantinople was considered more promptly. Britain made no stipulation as to Russia fortifying the Straits,[5] but economic and

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1 War Council Meeting, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1; Grey to Buchanan, tel., 10.iii.1915, F.O.371/2449/28770; Grey to Buchanan, tel., 10.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/25969.
2 CAB.27/1.
3 F.O.371/2449/34054.
4 F.O.371/2449/83731.
5 F.O.371/2449/28770.

trading rights were carefully worked out. There was to be free passage for shipping; free pilotage; no duties or dues on lights, dock wharfs and other facilities; Constantinople was to be a free port; there was only to be a small tariff on imports into the area taken over by the Russians.[1]

Grey handled the negotiations of March, 1915, with great skill. No Foreign Secretary could have held out against Russian demands. Grey was successful in preventing Russian claims starting a wholesale expansion of allied war aims. There was within the Cabinet a very powerful body of opinion which sought to stake out British claims in the Middle East. This group included Lord Crewe,[2] Kitchener,[3] Churchill and Lloyd George.[4] Grey thought that the British Empire was large enough and did not want to seize huge areas of the Ottoman Empire.[5] Furthermore, he did not wish the allies to have vast ambitions; ambitions which would have made it much more difficult to negotiate peace.

There seems little doubt that had Grey suggested to his allies, as some of his colleagues wished, that the Ottoman Empire be divided up there and then, this proposal would have been accepted. The Russian acquisition of Constantinople would have been a part of a much larger secret treaty, and the Turkish Empire would have been carved up in the Spring of 1915. Grey managed to avoid doing this. He kept to his original plan for Constantinople: a scheme to buy Russia out of Eastern and Central Europe.

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1 Foreign Office to Board of Trade, (copy), 17.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/28931; Views of the Board of Trade on Economic Safeguards for Russian Possession of Constantinople and the Straits, F.O.371/2479/36173.

2 India Office to Foreign Office, 12.ix.1914, F.O.371/2080/49001, and India Office Memorandum, CAB.24/1/G-16, [illegible].

3 Alexandretta and Mesopotamia, by Kitchener, CAB.24/1/G-13.

4 Minutes of War Council, 10.iii.1914, CAB.22/1.

5 Asquith, vol.II, p.69; Minutes of the War Council, 10.iii.1915, and 19.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.

The Straits Agreement was in essence what he wanted, a contraction rather than an expansion of allied war aims.

The sudden British acceptance of Russian demands left the French with a fait accompli. It is a revealing insight into Grey's mentality that this duplicity troubled him. He had to give Buchanan some explanation of why he had not consulted France. He first drafted a statement that was a lie. He told the Ambassador that he need not inform Paléologue, because, "your French colleague has already made a similar acceptance". He then amended this to a half-truth:

> "Your French colleague seems already to have made a communication of similar purport to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs."[1]

Since it would have been perfectly obvious to Paléologue that he had not agreed to Russian demands, shades of honesty and dishonesty had no political significance. It was just that Grey found lying to be disagreeable. He was never happy in the moral climate of the diplomatic system, and the diplomatic game held no fascination for him; it did not excite his imagination, it troubled his conscience.

Grey not only succeeded in deceiving the French, he completely misled Bertie. In the first place, Bertie missed the central point of Grey's policy, he wanted Russia to have Constantinople; in the second, Bertie wanted to resist Russian claims. His consternation was considerable when he learnt that Britain was accepting the terms of the Russian Aide-Memoire.

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1 Grey to Buchanan, tel., 10.111.1915, F.O.371/2479/25969.

After turning the whole matter over in his mind, he convinced himself that the British agreement had been an accident. What had happened had been that the Foreign Office had merely forgotten to send him the details of Russian demands, and because of this administrative lapse he had been unable to form a common Anglo-French policy. This hypothesis became so real in his own mind that he wrote a furious letter to Grey. He explained how a disaster was befalling the British Empire because of slackness in the administration of the Foreign Office.[1] Both Drummond[2] (now Grey's Private Secretary) and Grey[3] himself sent Bertie soothing letters of explanation. It was with a certain lack of grace that Bertie received the news that he had not been taken completely into Grey's confidence. He replied in a somewhat sulky and impertinent tone:

> "It is perhaps just as well that I did not know your (Grey's) views."[4]

The Ambassador could never bring himself to forgive Grey for his policy in March, 1915. When he learnt that Russia was not being very helpful in bringing neutrals into the war, he could not refrain from writing to Drummond:

> "our concessions to Russian sentiment do not seem to bear the refreshing fruit of counter-concessions when we wish to invite the co-operation of Greece and Italy. It is like drawing wisdom teeth out of Sazanow's obstinate jaw."[5]

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1 Bertie to Grey, 10.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.
2 Minute by Drummond, 31.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.
3 Grey to Bertie, 15.iii.1915, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177.
4 Bertie to Grey, 18.iii.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/57.
5 Bertie to Drummond, 7.iv.1915, (copy), Bertie Papers, F.O.800/177.

10. Conclusion.

The Agreement over Constantinople and the Straits of March, 1915, was the culmination of Grey's policy from the beginning of the war; a policy which aimed at first to bribe Russia to throw all her weight against Germany, then to persuade her to keep out of Persia, and finally to ease the task of negotiating peace by finding Russia compensation in Turkey rather than in Europe.

When Grey and his colleagues came to write their memoirs, they were reluctant to admit that there had been more behind the question of Constantinople than a mere concession to Tsarist Imperialism. This was understandable; they were writing at a time when there was a ferocious, and in many ways unreasonable, criticism of the Secret Treaties of the Great War. Yet in not telling the full story, Grey did not do full justice to the complexity of his motives or, more sadly, to the nobility of his ideals and the high-mindedness of his purpose.

CHAPTER VI

GERMAN COLONIES

1. Introduction.

It would be a conceptual error to try to explain British policy towards the German colonies in the light of imperialist doctrines. There was no inevitable correlation of ideas between a desire to maintain the Empire and will to extend it; imperialism did not necessarily mean imperial expansion. Whether Britain chose to add to her overseas territories depended largely on technical considerations. The report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, which met in April, 1915, stated:

> "Our Empire is wide enough already, and our task to make firm and lasting the position we already hold, and to pass on to those who come after an inheritance that stands four square to the world."[1]

Expansionist imperialism was not a crucial influence on the development of British policy towards Germany's overseas Empire.

Three pragmatic considerations shaped attitudes towards the future of Germany's overseas Empire. Firstly, a desire for security: as the De Bunsen Committee put it, to straighten the "ragged edges"[2] of the Empire. Secondly, relations with the allies and the Dominions. there was a need

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1 Report, Proceedings and Appendices of a Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister, Preliminary Considerations, section 10, CAB.27/1.

2 Report, Proceedings and Appendices of a Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister, Preliminary Considerations, section 11, CAB.27/1.

to find France, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa compensation in the peace settlement. There was also some feeling that French and Japanese claims ought to be balanced by British gains. Thirdly, the progress of the war: ambitions tended to expand when the war was going well and to contract when it was going badly.

2. Some Comments on Professor Louis' Volume.

The appearance of Professor Louis' monograph[1], Great Britain and the Lost German Colonies, 1914-1919, may seem to obviate the need for further research and comment on the subject. There is much to admire in Louis' study: the author has drawn on a wide range of primary materials, and it is a source of inspiration and guidance to all his successors. On certain topics - Togoland and the Cameroons - there is little or nothing to add to Louis' narrative. But there are many ideas Louis puts forward that are in this author's opinion erroneous and misleading. As his study stands on the flank of this narrative, it is worth noting, both for the clarity of this dissertation and out of a sense of obligation to Professor Louis himself, why I cannot concur with the central theme of his study.

The main flaw in Louis' book is his analysis of the policies of Lewis Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary until May, 1915. Harcourt is the key figure in Louis' narrative of the early part of the war. According to Louis, great "geopolitical importance" was attached to the colonial issue by some.

"British statesmen who believed the German gains in Europe could be

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1 Louis, Wm. Roger, Great Britain and the Lost German Colonies (1967).

"offset only by a consolidation and expansion of the British Empire overseas. The high priests of this doctrine were Lewis Harcourt (Colonial Secretary until May 1915), and three members of the War Cabinet (from December 1916), Lord Curzon, General J. C. Smuts of South Africa, and Lord Milner. To them the war was being fought, above all, to achieve security for the Empire - a goal, so far as they were concerned, that could not be obtained without the elimination of the German colonies."[1]

Louis' generalisation is a very sweeping one. There is an obvious link between Milner, Smuts and Curzon; they shared a common passion for the British Empire. But to link Harcourt with this 'trinity' is very strange.

Before the war Harcourt was not a liberal imperialist; quite the reverse, he was one of the most extreme of the radical-pacifist members of the Cabinet. During the Boer War Harcourt had been a fierce critic of Milner's policies. Moreover, Harcourt had been the most pro-German member of Asquith's Cabinet.[2] He had tried to make colonial concessions to secure her goodwill. In February, 1914, Bertie noted:

> "Crowe informed me that Harcourt had been commissioned by Grey to have a give and take negotiation with the German Embassy (over Portuguese Colonies), but that Harcourt had told the Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, Sir John Anderson, that for political reasons he wished to make concessions to Germany and therefore Anderson was to devise a scheme which would do so and only give the appearance of giving satisfaction to our interests. The result of Harcourt's negotiations is the initialled agreement which Grey <u>now</u> wishes to render abortive and by which we gain next to nothing."[3]

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1 Louis, p.2.
2 Chapter II.
3 Memorandum by Bertie, 19.11.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/188.

The Anglo-German agreement over Portuguese colonies fell through over the issue of publication. Harcourt was bitterly disappointed and wrote to Grey:

> "the abandonment of the initialled agreement with Germany would produce a most unfortunate effect."[1]

During the July crisis it was Harcourt who was the leader of the group that wished to split the Cabinet rather than support France.[2]

> "You must speak out for us," he urged Lloyd George, "Grey wishes to go to war without any violation of Belgium."[3]

On the 30th July, 1914, Bertie noted:

> "Apropos the present critical state of Europe Murray (of Elibank) told me that when in the Morocco crisis Asquith was determined to come to the aid of France by sending a British force to the Continent, Belgium or elsewhere, he did not inform Loreburn, who when he learnt it, told Murray that had he and Harcourt known it they would have broken up the Cabinet, Loreburn for love of peace, Harcourt from preference of Germany to France."[4]

If we are to believe Louis, the Little Englander, pro-German Harcourt of 2 August, 1914, became, and literally overnight, an expansionist, anti-German imperialist, armed with geo-strategic ideas. This, of course, is just possible; but the fact that Louis neglects to mention that Harcourt's pre-war system of ideas was in direct contradistinction to the outlook he attributes to him, hardly adds weight to his narrative or credit to his historical approach.

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1 Harcourt to Grey, 25.11.1914, Grey Papers, F.O./800/91.
2 Professor Temperley's record of an interview with Grey, Spender Papers, add.56386.
3 Harcourt to Lloyd George, undated, c.2.viii.1914, Lloyd George Papers, C.13/envelope I. item i.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 30.vii.1914, Bertie Papers, F.O./800/174.

This is not all Louis ignores. He neglects to mention the very considerable body of information which indicates that Harcourt's plans were nowhere near as doctrinaire as he asserts. There are statements made by Harcourt in the War Council[1] and many mimutes[2] in the Colonial Office files that would require most ingeneous interpretation to reconcile them to Professor Louis' analysis of Harcourt.

Now Louis might be permitted to ignore all this contradictory information if he could demonstrate that the hard core of Harcourt's beliefs lay in what Louis calls "geo-strategy". Louis never establishes this point: it stands only by virtue of not being examined. It is no more than a faulty theory. Let us look more closely at what Louis means when he explains Harcourt's war aims:

> "To the geo-strategists who saw the war as a global as well as a European struggle against German militarism, the successful campaigns against the German colonies seemed to ensure the future security of the Empire. Harcourt was the outstanding representative of that school of thought in 1914-16. Even if Germany at the end of the war were able to make gains in Europe, he believed they would be offset by the loss of her colonial Empire."[3] ..... his "reasoning is easy to follow. Until the last months of the war, it seemed entirely possible that Germany would emerge from the struggle as the master of Europe whose next ambition would be global

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1 War Council Mimutes, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.

2 e.g. "If N.Z. are to have Samoa eventually they must pay all (costs of occupation). If Samoa is to be given up we must I suppose pay here the cost of temporary occupation." Mimute by Harcourt, 1.x.1914, C.O.616/5/37254. This is hardly the comment of a rabid, expansionist imperialist. Very many similar examples can be found.

3 Louis, p.68.

> hegemony. But only with colonies as bases for her submarines and airplanes, and with the help of African manpower, would Germany be able to bid for world conquest. Without an overseas Empire, Germany would be contained in Europe."[1]

Alas, Harcourt's reasoning was not quite as easy to follow as Louis imagines. Louis badly misinterprets evidence. To take one example, and probably the most important, Harcourt's memorandum The Spoils,[2] which he wrote in March, 1915. This was the most extreme statement of Harcourt's views and Louis places great emphasis upon it. What Louis does not mention is that the meaning of this memorandum is precisely the inverse of what he alleges. Harcourt did indeed outline a scheme for the division of Germany's colonial Empire, but he prefixed this scheme by explicitly stating that these terms would only be realised if Germany was completely defeated. According to Louis, the whole point of "geo-strategic" thinking was to protect the Empire if Germany was not defeated. It is patently obvious that had Harcourt held the ideas that Louis asserts, then he would not have said that his claims would only be realized in the event of a total allied victory. He would have said the precise opposite. Equally clearly, Harcourt meant that in the case of a drawn struggle some of Germany's colonies would be given back.

Having made a minute examination of Louis' narrative, it can be said that he does not bring forward one shred of evidence that establishes his central thesis about Harcourt. There is every reason to believe that his

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1 Louis, p.2. Even in the case of Lord Milner this thesis has no basis. Louis accepts the faulty view put forward by A.M.Gollin, (Proconsul in Politics: A study of Lord Milner in Opposition and Power, 1964) that Milner wanted a negotiated peace at the expense of Russia. Recent research by my good friend Mr.Victor Rothwell shows that this idea is erroneous.

2 There is a copy of this memorandum in the Asquith Papers, MS.114, and also in the Lloyd George Papers, but I could not find a copy in the Public Record Office.

policies evolved from the more pragmatic considerations outlined in the introduction of this chapter.

3. German East Africa, August - December, 1914.

Under Article XI of the Berlin Treaty of 1885, large areas of East and Central Africa - Belgian Congo; the British possessions of Uganda, British East Africa, Zanzibar; the northern strip of Angola; the southern part of Italian Somaliland; German East Africa - had been neutralised, and made into an area of free trade. On 9 August, 1914, the Belgian Minister in London, Count de Lallang, called at the Foreign Office and saw Nicolson. The Permanent Under Secretary was told that the Belgian Government sought the neutralisation of the Belgian Congo under Article XI of Berlin Treaty. He further explained that the French had already agreed to this proposal, and they were making representations to Germany through the auspices of the Spanish Government.[1]

The Belgian plan was not warmly received in London. The permanent officials at the Foreign Office were well aware that Germany would demand that the Berlin Treaty should be implemented in its entirety, and German East Africa would be neutralised as well. They were not prepared to allow Germany to keep her African colonies out of the war. The problem had long since been foreseen: in 1911, the Colonial Defence Committee had argued that if there were an Anglo-German war, then Article XI of the Berlin Treaty would have to go by the board. As Britain was the strongest

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1 Minute by Nicolson, 9.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/38350; Memorandum by Count de Lallang, 9.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617; A.Hardinge to Grey, tel., 12.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/38483.

local military and naval Power, it would be foolish to allow Germany to invoke the Treaty.

> "In a war with Germany the advantage of the observance of neutrality with respect to the Protectorates in the Free Zone would lie.... ....with Germany and not with G.B."[1]

On 5 August, 1914, a sub-committee had met to consider offensives against the German colonies. The Committee consisted of representatives from the War Office, the Admiralty, the Colonial Office, the India Office and senior officers of British African Regiments. They agreed that the Indian Government should organize a force against German East Africa,[2] and the next day the Cabinet sanctioned "a small force being sent from India against Dar-es-Salaam."[3]

The civilservants at the Foreign Office saw these military plans as a means of obtaining both short and long-term advantages. Britain might need German territories to barter with in the peace settlement;[4] in the event of a total victory, they sought to consolidate Britain's African Empire by absorbing German East Africa.

> "German treaty rights and aspirations in Africa," wrote Sperling, "....are a very serious hindrance to the expansion of British influence and commerce in the regions affected and depend largely on the possession by Germany of German East Africa."[5]

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1 Minute by Percy, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Sub-Committee of C.I.D. to consider Offensives Against German Colonies, 5.viii.1914, Asquith Papers, MS.111. Again, there appears to be no record of this meeting in materials at the Public Record Office. The copy in the Asquith is a duplicated copy; it was usual for C.I.D. reports to be printed; it is probable that in the hectic days of early August, 1914, it was forgotten to keep proper records.
3 Summary by Hankey of Sub-Committee of the C.I.D., 6.viii.1914, and marginal notes by Asquith, Asquith Papers, MS.111.
4 Minute by Sperling, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
5 Minute by Sperling, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.

Clerk agreed[1], and pointed to the long-standing dream of a Cape - to-Cairo Railway. Sir Eyre Crowe felt:

> "It is a recognised imperial interest to establish a territorial connection between the British protectorates in East Africa and Uganda on the one hand and Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa on the other."[2]

Why should the Foreign Office have been so eager to add to the weight of Britain's imperial burdens? At one extreme, Sir Arthur Nicolson looked upon the war as an inevitable day of reckoning; the fittest empires would triumph and the weak would go to the wall. Such were the inevitable rules of what late Victorians would have called "national virility". To deprive Germany of her colonies was to do no more than to abide by the laws of nature.[3]

Sir Eyre Crowe is a more typical example of the ideas of his English contemporaries. Crowe was probably the most anti-German of the permanent officials at the Foreign Office, and believed that Imperial Germany lusted after universal domination. More interestingly, he was a very systematic thinker, he deduced his policy from a theoretical view of international relations. While other civil servants differed from Crowe on points of emphasis and were never quite so ruthlessly logical, the pattern of Crowe's ideas was typical of those held in the Foreign Office in this period.

The impersonal rule of Nicolson's universe was a process of

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1 Minute by Clerk, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Minute by Crowe, 11.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
3 Minute by Nicolson, 13.viii.1914, F.O.371/1901/43088.

international elimination; Crowe's world was dominated by the idea of competition: for the one struggle for organic; for the other it was mechanistic. Crowe's theory of politics was similar to classical theories of economics. All states sought to maximise their power, in just the same way as businesses sought to maximise their profits.[1] Like classical theories of economics, Crowe's model was a simplification: its sole actors were sovereign states, their sole activity was the accretion of their international power.

Given Crowe's assumptions, other ideas naturally followed. The only fountain of morality was the sovereign state; to say that there was such a thing as international morality was either silly or,to use one of Crowe's favourite phrases, "conscious humbug". There was nothing immoral about depriving Germany of her colonies; it was an action equivalent to driving an unscrupulous competitor into bankruptcy.

Crowe's theory of state behaviour held that Germany (or any state) would always try to assert their international position. To give Germany back her colonies, on the grounds that this would ease Anglo-German relations in the future, would be a very expensive and short-sighted philanthropy. Crowe believed that it would be wise to keep Germany as a strong power in Europe as a balance to Franco-Russian alliance.[2] The situation was not at all the same in Africa, there German possessions were a direct threat to the security of the Empire.

Grey agreed that Germany should not be allowed to keep her colonies

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1 Crowe to Paget, 14.x.16, Paget Papers, add.51256.
2 Chapter 3.

out of the war. It would also seem that at this time (August, 1914), he desired to keep German East Africa after the war. In a letter to the Colonial Office outlining the Foreign Office's views on Congo neutrality, Crowe wrote:

> "Sir Edward Grey thinks it is desirable to take the offensive as vigorously as possible against all German Colonial possessions, especially those in Africa, where, as Mr. Harcourt is aware, German treaty rights and aspirations form a serious obstacle to the expansion of British interests."[1]

It should be noted that this letter is not conclusive proof that Grey had designs on German East Africa. Official communications between Departments of State were always made in the name of the Minister. The gist of Crowe's letter is taken from Sperling's minute (which has already been quoted), and not from any written comment of Grey's. It could have been that whoever drafted the letter to the Colonial Office (probably Lord Drogheda, Crowe's acting Private Secretary), took Grey's initials to mean that he agreed with the reasoning of his civil servants. In fact, it could have been that the Foreign Secretary only agreed with the recommendation that they should not allow German East Africa to be neutralised.

The Colonial Office[2] also felt that there could be no question of neutralising Central Africa, and the French[3] and Belgians[4] were informed that the Congo would not be kept out of the struggle.

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1 Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 13.viii.1914,(copy), F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 15.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/39514.
3 Grey to Cambon, 16.viii.1914, (copy), F.O.371/1882/39514.
4 Grey to Count Lailang, 16.viii.1914, (copy), F.O.371/1882/39514.

The major difference between the Colonial Office's outlook and the Foreign Office's was that the former was very much more provincial in its attitudes. Harcourt and his advisers were tormented by the fear that France and Belgium would pre-empt the British offensive against German East Africa: their soldiers would occupy German territory and Britain would never be able to establish her claims. For the first four months of the war the Colonial Office refused to allow French or Belgian troops to attack German East Africa. Harcourt was as anxious about French and Belgian expansion as he was concerned about dangers arising from Germany possessing an overseas Empire. His suppicions were the legacy of traditional animosities and departmental jealousy. The military operations against German East Africa were under the control of the Colonial Office,[1] and Harcourt seems to have wanted a triumph for his own Department. As Sir Philip Magnus has observed:

> "Lewis Harcourt, the aesthetic Colonial Secretary .... was charmed by his rôle as director of military operations in different parts of Africa."[2]

On 10 August, the French offered to send detachments from Madagascar against Dar-es-Salaam.[3] Harcourt declined the offer.[4]

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1 The Sub-Committee of the C.I.D. dealing with offensives against the German Colonies seems to have met from time to time throughout the period August-November, 1914, and to have supervised military arrangements. In September, 1914, Lambert, a Clerk at the Colonial Office, referred to "Sir G.Fiddes' Committee". The Committee he meant was doubtless the C.I.D.Sub-Committee on which Fiddes sat for the Colonial Office. There would appear to be no Minutes of this Committee, except for the single record -in the Asquith Papers- of the meeting of 5 August, 1914. In a Foreign Office minute, Lord Eustace Percy referred to the Committee, (he spoke of the "Overseas Defence Committee", but certainly meant the same committee as was referred to in Lambert's minute,) but Percy only knew of its dealing by word of mouth, and this points to the fact that its minutes have not been lost, but rather that they were never made. From the way strategic decisions were arrived at, it is evident that the Committee only had a supervisory function. The references to the Committee in F.O.371/1882/37617. C.O.616/4/36229. F.O.371/1883/40171.

2 Magnus, p.343.

3 Bertie to Grey, tel., 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37836.

4 Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 11.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/38060. F.O.371/37860; Grey to Bertie, tel., 12.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/38060.

At the end of August, 1914, the India Office suggested that the campaign against German East Africa was a "side show" and should be postponed. Harcourt indignantly refused even to consider the matter.[1]

There were more tribulations ahead for the Colonial Secretary. On 21 September, it was reported that Belgian troops were being sent to Rhodesia to attack Bismarcksburg.[2] The Indian Expedition was already prepared, and Harcourt grew frantic lest the prizes of war be snatched from his grasp at the last minute. He instructed Buxton, the High Commissioner of South Africa:

> "From a political point of view it is eminently undesirable to have Belgium taking part in operations against German Colonies in Africa either by themselves or in co-operation with British forces, and you should endeavour to discourage such action as far as possible. I must leave it to your discretion what reasons should be given, such as lack of supplies or others." [3]

When, at the beginning of October, further reports came in of Belgian troops preparing for an attack, Harcourt again insisted:

> "Belgian action (is) most undesirable in view of possible political complications hereafter and should be discouraged as much as possible."[4]

The Belgians saw that any attempt made on a local level to co-ordinate military policy would be frustrated, and approached the British Government through diplomatic channels.[5] By this time the Foreign

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1 Minute by Harcourt, 26.viii.1914, C.O.616/2/32062.
2 Buxton to Harcourt. tel., 21.ix.1914, C.O.616/4/36229.
3 Harcourt to Buxton, tel., 22.ix.1914, C.O.616/4/36229 - also in F.O.371/1882/52448.
4 Harcourt to Governor of the East African Protectorate, tel. 3.x.1914, F.O.371/1882/56308.
5 Villiers to Grey, tel., 6.x.1914, F.O.371/1882/56273.

Office was beginning to find Harcourt's policy to be petty and unnecessary.
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Sperling advised the Foreign Secretary to reconsider the question:

> "It (the refusal to co-operate with Belgium) was prompted originally by the apprehension felt at the C.O. that the Belgian Government might seek some compensation in German East Africa at the edd of the war, if we accept active co-operation of their Colonial troops" .... the "Belgians will be so indebted to England after the war that they will not claim anything England wants."[1]

Grey, who had from August been willing to co-operate with Belgium,[2] approached Harcourt on the matter,[3] but was firmly told:

> "The Indian Expedition to Dar-es-Salaam is due on the 14th. It is very important that no offensive in German East Africa should be taken from the Belgian side. I hope this may be stopped for the present at any rate."[4]

Grey, who had a marked tendency to bow to military opinion, even when it was expressed by someone as obviously lacking in martial qualities as Harcourt, gave way. When, at the end of October, the Belgians made a further appeal for Anglo-Belgian military co-operation in Africa, the Colonial Office again refused to reconsider its position.[5]

In the first week in November, the Indian Expedition against German East Africa suffered a humiliating setback off Tanga.[6] The Foreign Office immediately turned on the Colonial Office for having refused Belgian military assistance.

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1 Minute by Sperling, 6.x.1914, F.O.371/1882/56273.
2 Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 11.viii.1914, C.O.616/12/30086.
3 Grey to Harcourt, 6.x.1914, (copy), F.O.371/1882/56273.
4 Harcourt to Grey, 8.x.1914, F.O.371/1882/56273.
5 F.O.371/1882/61632; F.O.371/1882/66873.
6 Guinn, P.A., British Strategy and Politics, 1914-1918 (1965) p.33.

> "The whole difficulty arises from the extraordinary jealousy of the Colonial Office of any action taken by the Congo troops beyond the Congo frontier. The result of this policy can only be the prolongation of the operations against German East Africa with unnecessary loss of a good many lives."[1]

The Foreign Office sent a communication, which contained "some pretty plain speaking,"[2] to the Colonial Office, and Grey once again saw Harcourt on the subject of Belgium taking the offensive against German East Africa.[3]

The military fiasco greatly weakened the authority of the Colonial Office. Military operations were put under the control of the War Office.[4] On 25 November, the French were invited to send colonial troops from Madagascar to German East Africa.[5] The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office gave the War Office conflicting advice about co-operating with Belgium.[6] The War Office found the ideas of the Foreign Office to be more congenial from a military point of view. Not that the War Office's analysis of the campaign in Africa was such as to encourage confidence.

> "As far as I can make out," General Callwell informed Sir Arthur Nicolson, "His Majesty's Government have no definite military policy in that part of the world."[7]

Up to December, 1914, operations against German East Africa were

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1 Minute by Sperling, 17.xi.1914, F.O.371/1882/71865.
2 Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 16,xi.1914, (copy), Minute by Sperling, 17.xi.1914, F.O.371/1882/71852.
3 Minute by Grey, undated, c.17.xi.1914, F.O.371/1882/71865.
4 Guinn, p.33.
5 Grey to Bertie, tel., 25.xi.1914, and minutes of Harcourt and Kitchener, undated c.25.xi.1915, F.O.371/1882/75245.
6 F.O.371/1882/82994.
7 Callwell to Nicolson, 9.xii.1914, F.O.371/1882/81461.

made with a view to keeping that colony after the war was over. The campaign was conceived as a colonial campaign in Victorian style. Harcourt treated himself to the luxury of subordinating sound military principles to political needs. Nineteenth century strategic concepts were married to nineteenth century political phobias. The Colonial Office was unwilling to look at the war on a global scale, and could think only of local differences with France and Belgium. It can also be noted that the phenomenon that alliances are most cohesive when the common danger is greatest operates through space as well as through time. In Africa, where the allies faced little military danger from Germany, co-operation was not merely poor, it was deliberately avoided.

The Foreign Office took a broader and more sensible view of the war than did the Colonial Office; it was not so petty politically, and it had a finer grasp of military necessities. While the two Departments squabbled over how the campaign against German East Africa was to be conducted, they were in agreement on its purpose: German East Africa was to be British after the war.

4. <u>German East Africa, December 1914 - March 1915</u>.

The campaign in German East Africa was a small event. Its relationship to the war in Europe was like that which one finds in Shakespearean drama between minor and major plots. The African campaign was on an altogether smaller and more trivial plane, distinguished only by bickerings, misunderstandings and incompetence, all designed to give

light relief to the more massive circumstances unfolding behind. Being an event of less consequence, its destiny was subject to external influence.

In November and December, 1914, two major developments effected a change in attitudes towards German East Africa: the entry of Turkey into the war; the deadlock in the war in Europe. The former shifted imperial preoccupations from Africa to the Middle East; the latter caused some members of the Government to consider allowing Germany to retain her East African possessions after the war.

Before the entry of Turkey into the war, German East Africa had been the richest prize that Britain could hope to gain. It was largest and most prosperous of German colonies; it stood on the flank of the Indian Ocean, and the port of Dar-es-Salaam could be used as a base from which to threaten mercantile routes. German aggression and instincts of self-defence and greed (rather than elaborate doctrines of imperialism) made it a natural focus for British ambitions.

With the entry of Turkey into the war, attention moved from Africa to the Middle East. The overwhelming majority of the British Government felt that if imperial interests had to be secured through expansion, then it was far more important to absorb parts of the Ottoman Empire than to take German territories. The only Department that to some extent held out against this opinion was, somewhat naturally, the Colonial Office.

The changing priorities of the Foreign Office can be traced quite easily through the attitudes of George Russell Clerk. In August, 1914,

Clerk had strongly argued the case for keeping German East Africa after the war.[1] Once Britain was at war with Turkey, he saw it as being infinitely more important to ~~secure~~ British interests in Mesopotamia than those in Africa. In March, 1915, he advised Grey:

> "It is important that we should have a clear idea of what we want for ourselves in the Turkish Empire. Our allies have probably each got their shares of the Sick Man's inheritance clearly defined in their minds, and if we do not take care we shall find ourselves 'left'."[2]

When the expedition to Mesopotamia suffered a setback, he urged that if necessary troops be taken ffom East Africa to protect Britain's position in the Middle East:

> "the one disaster is temporary, the other is permanent and incalculable."[3]

Similar sentiments were expressed even more forcibly by Kitchener. His eyes were so rivetted on the dessert that he was willing to neglect the hors-d'oeuvres altogether.

> "But it is not only in Turkey that there is likely to be territory to divide up at the end of the war. There are also German colonies in Africa, some of which will, as far as can be foreseen at present, be at the disposal of the Allies when the settlement comes. These German African possessions are no doubt of value to whatever Power eventually retains them, but it would be absurd to compare their value to the British Empire with that of Alexandretta, Mesopotamia and the Bagdad Railway, and with all that their possession would mean as security to Egypt and the Suez Canal, as well as India."[4]

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1 Minute by Clerk, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Minute by Clerk, 9.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/27177.
3 Minute by Clerk, 5.iii.1915, F.O.371/2479/25893.
4 Alexandretta and Mesopotamia by Lord Kitchener, 16.iii.1915, CAB.24/1/G-12.

At a lower level, the Middle Eastern pressure group was far more numerous and powerful than the African one. The imperial vision shifted bodily from Africa to the Middle East. Even Harcourt[1] was obliged to acknowledge that claims in Mesopotamia would have to take precedence over claims for German colonies.

Considerations of quite a different nature also began to influence policy towards German East Africa. German East Africa was the only one of the German colonies in which Britain had a free-hand to decide its destiny. Elsewhere-West Africa, S.W.Africa and the Pacific - the allies and the Dominions had an important, and often predominant, voice. They insisted that the German colonies adjacent to their own territories should be confiscated. The larger part of Germany's overseas Empire passed beyond recall. The only area where Britain could make some gesture of goodwill towards Germany was German East Africa. There was therefore a strong case for allowing Germany to keep the colony after the war.

> "It would be a mistake," Kitchener told the War Council, "to acquire more of these (German colonies) than we could avoid, as it would more than anything else interfere with the future establishment of goodwill between Germany and ourselves."[2]

This view was also held by Churchill.[3]

The Foreign Secretary came out against retaining German East Africa after the war. He told the War Council[4] and Asquith[5] that the Empire

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1 The Spoils, March 1915, by Harcourt, Asquith Papers, M.S.114.
2 War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
3 War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
4 War Council, 10.iii.1915, and 19.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
5 Asquith, vol.II, p.69.

was large enough already, and it would be unwise to add further to British responsibilities. It is probable that Grey had a more potent reason for not wanting to take German East Africa: he did not want to prolong the war more than was necessary. In the early months of the war Grey had raised no profound objections to keeping German East Africa after the war. His civil servants and the Colonial Office had both worked on the assumption that it would be retained in perpetuity, and the Foreign Secretary had not opposed this assumption. Usually when he wanted to caution the Foreign Office about its views, he wrote a short minute indicating his objections. He did not do so in this case. Moreover, in the correspondence between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office there were no deflections which would indicate that Grey was opposing the general consensus. The Foreign Secretary was in the habit of thinking of a line of action for one reason and explaining it in terms of another. It is quite likely that in the early part of the war, when he had believed that the war could be brought to a triumphant conclusion, he was prepared to keep German East Africa. With the deadlock in the war in Europe, he wanted to limit allied claims as much as possible. However, being unduly sensitive to the gossip in the Foreign Office and Governmental circles that he was excessively "pacifist" in his attitude to the war, he explained his views in terms of broad strategic ideas. This explanation would be more consistent with what we know of Grey's war aims generally: the general contraction of allied claims from December, 1914, onwards. It is also more consistent with other records of his attitude towards German East Africa. In a long conversation about war

aims with Bertie, Grey raised no strategic objections to claiming German East Africa. Bertie's memorandum on Grey's views indicate that his main reason for not wanting German East Africa was to avoid putting Britain and her allies in a position where they would not be able to negotiate peace with Germany.[1]

After December, 1914, German East Africa became relatively less important in British war aims. On one level, the imperial vision shifted from Africa to Turkey. On another level, setbacks in the principle theatres of war made it seem unlikely that Britain would be able to enforce a settlement in which Germany was completely stripped of her overseas possessions. There arose a dualism in war aims: if the war could be won decisively, then the arguments for retaining Germany's overseas Empire would be overwhelming; if military stalemate continued, then the arguments in favour of returning German East Africa were in the ascendent.

5. Japan.

The future of Germany's colonies north of the equator was settled in the first five months of the war. Japan fell heir to one half of Germany's Pacific Empire. While this division of territory had been swift, it had not been Britain's intention to give Japan the opportunity to extend her dominions. As in German East Africa, British policy was aimed at keeping her allies out of Germany's overseas Empire; firstly,

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1 Memorandum by Bertie, 11.viii.1916, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171; see also Minute by Grey, undated, c.4.ix.1915, Grey Papers, F.O.800/95.

in order to ensure that imperial tranquillity was not disturbed by the expansion of rival empires; secondly, in order to keepopen as many options as possible.

Grey found these objectives impossible to realize. The absence of a community of Anglo-Japanese interests meant that the two "island empires" could only reconcile their differences by recognising their common right to expansion at the expense of the mutual enemy. The systematic resort to this means of minimising Anglo-Japanese tensions led inevitably to the division of the German Empire in the Pacific. But in August, 1914, the chain of events seemed nowhere near as inexorable.

Commenting on the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Professor Grenville has written:

> "Alliances are usually founded on a community of interests and the desire to pursue similar policies. This, however, was not the basis on which the Anglo-Japanese alliance was built."[1]

This absence of a community of purpose was revealed in August, 1914, when Britain made no attempt to fully invoke her alliance with Japan. Australia and New Zealand were never very happy with the Japanese alliance, and had no wish to see Japan extend her Empire by seizing German territories. The United States looked on anxiously lest Japan used the war in Europe as an opportunity to gain a commanding position in the Pacific.[2] The British

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1 Grenville, J.A.S., Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century (1964), p.390.

2 Lodge to Grey, 17.viii.1914, Grey Papers, F.O.800/108; Barclay to Grey, tel., 8.viii.1914, F.O.371/2168/37529.

Government were sensitive to the apprehensions of the Dominions and the United States, and not least because they shared their fears.

The political disadvantages of inviting Japan to fully participate in the war were by no means counterbalanced by her value as an ally in war. The Royal Navy was thought to have a sufficient preponderance of force to destroy Germany's wireless and telegraphic system in the Pacific, and to drive the German Fleet from the High Seas. This done, the fall of German islands in the Pacific would be a matter of course. England had little to gain and much to lose by inviting Japanese entry.

The most articulate and least tactful challenge to this policy came from Sir Eyre Crowe. One of Crowe's minutes gives us an unclouded glimpse of his own forceful personality and grinding logic, and the preoccupations of his political masters.

> "I still hope our policy (of not inviting Japan to enter the war) will be re-considered. In a war of this kind and magnitude there is one supreme and over-riding consideration: to smash the enemy definitely, rapidly and with the employment of all legitimate means."
>
> "Germany should be driven out of the whole Pacific and out of China. The question of the relative position of Britain and Japan after the war is, and should be, of secondary consideration. All half measures are a mistake."[1]

Grey liked neither Crowe's reasoning nor the somewhat aggressive style in which he expressed himself. He wearily rebuked Crowe:

> "The pros and cons of bringing in the Japanese are grave and would need too long a minute. For the present we do not ask the Japanese to come in and have left our Admiral a free hand."[2]

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1 Minute by Crowe, 10.viii.1914, F.O.371/2168/37529.
2 Minute by Grey, undated, c.10.viii.1914, F.O.371/2168/37529.

It soon became evident that, whether Britain desired it or not, Japan was determined to use the preoccupation of the European Powers elsewhere to further her own position in the Far East. On 8 August, Greene, the British Ambassador at Tokyo, reported that the Japanese Government were favourable to a declaration of war.[1] Grey refused to be drawn into giving the Japanese a casus belli in a request for Japanese help under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

> "I cannot say that the special interests of Great Britain ... are so seriously menaced as to make it essential on that ground alone to appeal to the alliance."

Britain asked for only a limited amount of naval assistance.[2]

It is easy to miss the significance of not fully invoking the Anglo-Japanese alliance. If Britain appealed to Japan for aid, then she was obliged to find her compensation in the peace settlement. She was, moreover, committing herself to something that she might not have to concede. It was by no means obvious that the Empire would be enfeebled by the war: it seemed possible, even probable, that Britain would emerge from the war as a member of victorious and dominant coalition. At the time of the peace settlement the balance of power in the Far East would have swung decisively in favour of Britain, and then she would regret promises made at a moment of weakness.

Grey left Japan in no doubt that he did not want her to seize

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1 Greene to Grey, tel., 8.viii.1914, F.O.371/2167/37281.

2 Grey to Greene, tel., 11.viii.1914, C.O.616/37/8443. This reference and certain subsequent ones are taken from a long Foreign Office memorandum presented to the Colonial Office in February, 1915. Having taken these telegrams down under a Colonial Office reference, I did not duplicate my labours by taking them down under a Foreign Office one. I apologise if this is the cause of some confusion to the reader: Asquith to King George V, 11.viii.1914, CAB. 35/1.

German territories in the Pacific.

> "What is required is ..... an assurance in any form that we or Japan can make public..... that will make it clear that Japan is not going to seize German islands in the Pacific, with which the self-governing Dominions desire to deal with themselves, and also she is not going to take advantage of the situation to seize Dutch East Indian colonies or interfere with the Pacific coast of China"..[1]

On 15 August, the Japanese Government delivered their ultimatum to Germany. On the same day, the Foreign Secretary impressed upon the Japanese Ambassador that it was essential that any declaration of war should be accompanied by a public statement that Japan would not attack German islands in the Pacific.[2] The Japanese response was hardly reassuring. Grey was given personal assurances that a public statement would be made, but the Japanese refused to commit themselves as to the time or the place. When, on 16 August, Japan announced to the world that she had delivered an ultimatum to Germany, it was a proclamation unaccompanied by any statement of intention to limit her military action. Greene immediately raised the matter with Japanese Foreign Minister, Baron Kato. This interview gave real cause for disquiet. The Ambassador suggested a number of ways by which Japan could assure Britain and her Dominions and friends that she had no designs on Germany's Pacific Empire. As quickly as Greene made suggestions, Kato provided ingenious and plausible explanations as to why Japan found them unacceptable. Greene came away feeling decidedly gloomy:

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1 Grey to Greene, tel., 13.viii.1914, C.O.616/37/8443.

2 Grey to Greene, tel. no.84, 15.viii.1914, Grey to Greene, tel., no.63, 15.viii.1914, C.O.616/37/8443.

> "It looks to me as if the Cabinet was reluctant to commit themselves to the limits suggested in your (Grey's) telegram."[1]

Two days later, however, events took a brighter turn. Japan gave a private assurance that she had:

> "no intention of seizing territories outside the China Seas, such as German islands in the Pacific, which might cause apprehension in Australia and New Zealand."[2]

At the same time Japanese Prime Minister made a public statement indicating that Japan's interest lay in rooting out German influence from China, and she harboured no ambitions elsewhere.

Grey had not succeeded in keeping Japan out of the war, but he had succeeded in limiting her claims. She would be rewarded with the German concession of Kiao-chow. On 19, August Grey noted the likely extent of Japan's territorial compensation:

> "It cannot be expected that Japan will spend blood and treasure in Kiao-Chow and get nothing for it - not even the remains of the German lease."[3]

Japan's action ran counter to her pledges: her war effort was not confined to protecting her trade routes and eradicating German influence in China. Early in October she began offensive operations against Germany's Pacific Islands. The Colonial Office found themselves in an awkward situation: they had to explain this unwelcome development to Australia and New Zealand. Harcourt resorted to a not altogether unexpected remedy:

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1 Greene to Grey, tel., 17.viii.1914, C.O./616/37/8443.
2 Green to Grey, tel., no.95, 19.viii.1914; Green to Grey, tel. no.96, 19.viii.1914, C.O./616/37/8443.
3 Minute by Grey, undated, c.19.viii.1914, F.O.371/2019/40679.

"Yes," he informed his Department, "certainly wait till Australia and New Zealand begin to complain."[1]

By the end of October Japan had captured all German possessions north of the equator - Pellew islands, East and West Caroline groups; Marshall islands; and their concession at Kiao-Chow. The Japanese claimed, both in private and public, that the occupation of these territories had been made solely for strategic reasons, and it was emphasised to the British Government that it was "not a political occupation."[2]

Grey realized that there could be no question of throwing the Japanese out of the territories they had occupied, and an agreement was reached whereby for the duration of the war Japan occupied German possessions north of the Equator, and the British Empire territories south of the Equator.[3] The Equator was the obvious line of demarcation: it corresponded to the actual areas under occupation, and it formed what Professor Schelling would deem to be a natural meeting point for "tacit bargaining". The Foreign Secretary still hoped to keep free of binding commitments, and insisted that:

> "all occupation of German territory by our respective forces during the war is without prejudice to permanent arrangements that will have to be made after the war when the Allies come to settle terms of peace."[4]

Yet for all his hopes, Grey must have seen that the fate of Germany's possessions north of the Equator was slipping out of Britain's hands. Britain's bargaining position was further weakened by a curious series of events in November, 1914.

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1 Minute by Harcourt, 8.x.1914, C.O.616/12/35180.
2 Greene to Grey, tel., 10.x.1914, C.O.616/12/32903.
3 C.O.616/13/46782; C.O.616/13/48511.
4 Grey to Greene, tel.no.216, 26.xi.1914, C.O.616/13/48511.

On 1 November, 1914, a British squadron was badly beaten at the Coronel.[1] The defeat made a trifling difference to Britain's overall naval superiority, but it came as a profound shock to the Admiralty and a bitter blow to public opinion. The Admiralty panicked and insisted on inviting Japanese aid in the war in the Pacific. What happened next is best described by Lord Eustace Percy:

> "late one night, after the disaster at the Coronel, the Cypher Department transmitted to Tokyo an Admiralty message which they could not, they felt, take the responsibility of querying or delaying. It was a request for the co-operation of Japanese cruisers in the hunt for the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. From that moment Japan became our active ally, with ultimate consequences in Pacific, and in Anglo-American relations, which were to change history."[2]

Percy was slightly exaggerating. Japan was already in possession of the German islands north of the Equator. But one point is clear, Britain had appealed for Japanese aid, and Britain was obliged to compensate her for her sacrifices in the war.

The Japanese Government saw their opportunity, and on 1 December the British Ambassador reported that the Japanese Foreign Minister had told him:

> "having regard to the very widespread operations which the Imperial Navy is and has been engaged in co-operation with the British Navy, the nation would naturally insist on retaining all islands lying north of the Equator, and the Imperial Government will rely on the support of His Majesty's Government when the proper time arrives for the fulfillment of the above object."[3]

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1 Marder, A.J., From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, (1965), vol.II pp.101-118.
2 Percy, p.43.
3 Greene to Grey, tel., 1.xii.1914, C.O.616/13/48511.

For all intents and purposes, the game was now up: Britain could do nothing but accept that after the war Japan would annex those territories she had occupied. Grey refused to make the matter the subject of secret engagements, and insisted the question would have to be decided at the peace settlement. At the same time, he assured the Japanese that:

> "We ..... shall not put forward formal claims in these regions (Japanese occupied territories) ourselves in the final terms of peace without full consultation with Japan."[1]

Britain had accepted that German possessions north of the Equator had passed beyondrecall. Harcourt began toprepare the Dominions for a Japanese Empire extending to the Equator:

> "I feel I ought to give you (Ferguson, the Governor-General of Australia) personally some explanation ..... our fleets were so fully engaged in the North Sea, Atlantic, Mediterranean, and in convoy of troops across the Indian Ocean that we could not spare enough to deal with the Pacific. We had therefore to call in Japanese aid .... this has changed the character of the Japanese participation and no doubt of their eventual claims to compensation ..... it is the intention of the Japanese at the end of the war to claim all the German islands North of the Equator ..... You ought in the most gradual and diplomatic way to begin to prepare your Ministers for thejpossibility that at the end of the war Japan may be left in possession of the Northern Islands and we with everything South of the Equator."[2]

Thus, by the end of 1914, the fate of Germany's Pacific Empire was sealed. How had this come about? British policy developed as a result of acontinual selection of alternatives, each of which left a diminished range of choice. In the end there was only one possible solution left.

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1 Grey to Greene, tel., 3.xii.1914, C.O.616/13/48511.
2 Harcourt to Ferguson, 6.xii.1914, quoted in Louis, p.42-43.

Having accepted Japanese entry into the war, Britain was obliged to recognise her claim for the German concession of Kiao-Chow; having accepted her occupation of German islands, she was constrained to accept the possibility of the Japanese refusing to return them; having asked for Japanese help, she was obliged to find her compensation for it; having received favourably Japan's claim that she was entitled to keep German islands North of the Equator, she had mortgaged her interests in that area. A very similar sequence of events had occured in Eastern and Central Europe, but there Grey was able to pay off the mortgage by the ingeneous scheme of substituting one set of claims with another: he exchanged the deeds of Eastern and Central Europe with the deeds of Constantinople and the Straits. With Japan there was nothing else to offer her; she was bound to keep what she already had. When, in May 1915, New Zealand complained bitterly about Japanese expansion, it was noted in the Colonial Office that:

> "We and New Zealand are met by the practical difficulty of turning Japan out of the islands, of which she is now in possession, which she wants to keep and in lieu of (which?) it is difficult to see what we are to offer her."[1]

In 1916, the War Office observed:

> "Japan is unlikely to release her hold on them (the territories she occupied) without a substantial quid pro quo, which it will not be easy to find."[2]

Policy towards Germany's Pacific colonies had evolved not from a single political plan, but rather as an outgrowth of a series of decisions

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1 Liverpool to Harcourt, 13.v.1915, and Minute by Just, 23.vi.1915, C.O.573/1173/28632.
2 Memorandum by Robertson, 30.viii.1916, CAB.29/1/P-4.

of a diplomatic nature. These decisions were made as a diplomatic solution for the problems of foreign policy, and without any clear idea of how the peace settlement should be organised.

6. Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa.

British policy towards German South-West Africa and German colonies in the Pacific South of the Equator grew out of the nature of Britain's relations with the Dominions. The Dominions, tied to Britain by economic, political, military and sentimental interests, made a significant contribution to the war effort. It was evident that they would have to be rewarded for their sacrifices, and it was obvious, from the very beginning of the war, that they would demand those German possessions adjacent to their territories.

German South-West Africa was the only German colony that was a direct threat to Imperial security. The Germans allowed it to be used as a refuge for rebellious Boers, and this was a continual source of irritation for the Union and for the Imperial Government.[1]

On 6 August, Harcourt appealed to the Union of South Africa to mount operations against strategic centres in German South-West Africa. He stressed, however:

> "You (the Governor-General of South Africa) will realize that any territory now occupied must at the conclusion of the war be at (the) disposal of the Imperial Government for (the) purpose of (the) ultimate settlement."[2]

In the Foreign Office Sir Eyre Crowe saw that, whatever stipulations were

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1 Louis, p.50.
2 Harcourt to Buxton, tel., 6.viii.1914, C.O.616/10/28764.

made, the Union would seek rewards for its sacrifices and outlets for its ambitions:

> "I feel that any such attempt" (to keep German colonies out of the war,) he wrote on 11 August, "would meet with strong disapproval in the Union of South Africa, who may be assumed to be willing and eager to assume the burdens of driving the Germans out of Africa bag and baggage."[1]

The Colonial Office itself had designs on the diamond mines of German South-West Africa. Sir John Anderson, the Permanent Under Secretary, observed:

> "Very satisfactory. We shall of course fall heirs to all Government property and rights (the German Government's holdings in the diamond mines) if we get South-West Africa."[2]

The South African campaign against South-West Africa began in January 1915, and was successfully concluded in June of the same year. Even before it was completed, Grey and Harcourt were convinced that South Africa would not allow South-West Africa to be returned after the war, and that it would be impolitic to insist that she did so.[3] This remained the assumption of the British Government for the rest of the war. In 1916, Bertie noted a difference of opinion between policy towards German East Africa and German South-West Africa:

> "Our South Africans," he told Grey, "would not tolerate the retrocession of German South-West Africa for the South Africans had taken German South-West Africa and were now conquering German East Africa. Grey agreed in regard to South-West Africa, but would not commit himself to the retention of German East Africa when taken."[4]

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1 Minute by Crowe, 11.viii.1914, F.O.371/1882/37617.
2 Minute by Anderson, 26.viii.1914, C.O.616/12/30600.
3 War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1.
4 Memorandum by Bertie, 11.viii.1916, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171: the same logic is apparent in the later part of the war - see The Report of Lord Curzon's Sub-Committee on Territorial Desiderata in the Terms of Peace, CAB.21/77.

British war aims with regard to Germany's colonies in the Pacific South of the Equator was moved by similar principles. When the Australians and New Zealanders took Somoa and German New Guinea, they took it for granted that their occupations would be permanent. As early as the 12 August 1914, the local New Zealand commander reported:

> "From a commercial standpoint German Somoa would be a valuable, though small, addition to His Majesty's Dominions."[1]

When Australian forces occupied German New Guinea, the local Chiefs were told that, "the British flag would not be hauled down."[2]

The Imperial Government tried for as long as possible to make it clear that the occupation of territory should not prejudice the eventual negotiation of the settlement. But it was hopeless to try to enforce this principle, and with Japanese claims for German territory north of the Equator, Australian and New Zealand rights could neither be denied nor refused.[3]

Conclusion

Nowadays it is customary to conceive of imperialism and imperial policy as political activities moved by principles fundamentally different to all others. This is more a reflection of the conscience and self-image of our age than it is an insight into the past. Imperialism has become unfashionable, and in doing so it has become ridiculous. It is seen as meaning more than the possession of a string of overseas

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1 Officer Commanding Local Forces to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, 12.vii.1914, C.O.616/2/40772.
2 Holmes to Ministry of Defence, Melbourne, 13.xi.1914, C.O.616/20/13596.
3 War Council, 10.iii.1915, CAB.22/1; Memorandum by Bertie, 11.viii.1916, Bertie Papers, F.O.800/171.

territories; rather it is a set of priorities and values which were supposed to have epitomised national amour propre, and which, we are told, we have nowemancipated ourselves from.

In a limited number of cases the idea of global policy being moved by a system of preconceived ideas holds good. Kitchener deduced his imperial policy from a highly emotive attitude towards the Empire, and saw imperial expansion as a preordained course. But Kitchener was by no means typical. He had spent his life defending the frontiers of the Empire. As Secretary of State for War he was out of touch and out of step with the rest of the Government. He was altogether less cultivated, less mentally agile and less urbane than his colleagues. Asquith's smooth Balliol mind could note:

> "K. who generally finds things out sooner or later - as a rule rather later."[1]

Kitchener was practically alone in seeing imperialism and imperial expansion as one and the same idea. Even Lord Curzon saw that there was no necessary correlation between these two ideas:

> "It was an amusing feature of our discussion," he wrote to Balfour, "that the Ministerswho took the most imperialistic line were lifelong Radicals, such as the P.M., Montagu and Barnes; while the people who were most anxious to curtail our responsibilities were the Conservatives, such as Milner, Chamberlain, and myself."[2]

From the archives one gains an impression that abstract doctrines of imperialism had only a marginal influence on the development of British policy towards the German colonies. One finds that the most powerful

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1 Quoted in Jenkins, p.383.
2 Curzon to Balfour, 10.viii.1919, Balfour Papers, add.49724.

emotions are greed, pride and fear; but these are universal sentiments which influence all forms of political bargaining and calculation. It would be naive to believe that they are more or less powerful in one generation than the next. British war aims with regard to the German colonies evolved in very much the same way as did the rest of British war aims. It was above all a response to immediate needs and anxieties. England was obliged to insist on the retention of German possessions in the Pacific and South-West Africa simply out of obligation to Australia, South Africa New Zealand/and Japan. With German East Africa Britain had a freer hand, and there was a more subtle interplay of forces. The most striking influence was the very parochial attitude of the Colonial Office, who were as anxious about France and Belgium as they were about Germany. Equally interesting is the way in which Grey tried to balance allied ambitions against their capacities.

Beneath all the eddying currents of opinion and sentiment one can perceive the powerful influence of impersonal factors. Above all, in the long run an almost intangible process of psychological commitment to the war against Germany: a commitment that made it very difficult to return her colonies. Arthur Balfour, always a detached observer of men and events, saw that there was a certain inexorable logic determining Britain's global policy:

> "Mr. Balfour remarked that it was a consequence of our geographical position that we had done most of the conquering of distant territory, and that this war might end like others in a map of the world with more red on it."[1]

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1 Minutes of the Eastern Committee, 24.iv.1918, CAB.27/24.

CONCLUSION

In the early part of the Great War Britain fought for security: she sought to protect and maintain that which she already possessed. The main purpose of the war was to drive the German armies from the west of Europe and to safeguard Britain from German attack in the future: Germany was to evacuate Belgium and to pay compensation to her: France was to receive Alsace-Lorraine; German naval power was to be drastically reduced. While Britain sought checks to German aggression in the future, she also sought to destroy the influence of those who had disturbed the peace of Europe, the German military. There was a profound conviction, based on experience of the events of July, 1914, that no settlement would be secure as long as the German military could determine their nation's destiny. These were the irreducible guarantees that Britain sought.

British claims for German colonies in East and West Africa were more negotiable. In this respect it is useful to borrow the economists' concept of the marginal unit. The advantages of taking German colonies were balanced against the cost of enforcing such a settlement. But it is easy to drive the parallel too far: the bargaining situation was not quite the same as that in the economic market; calculations were essentially in the style of mental arithmetic - "if such and such a situation arises then we might do this or that." Speculation about "ifs" in history is not always a fruitful exercise, but it is often a quite interesting one. Had the situation arisen where the German armies had sustained severe- though not

crippling - setbacks, and Germany offered terms which met the irreducible claims of the British Government, then probably she would have salvaged some of her African colonies.

Though Britain sought security, she lacked the strength to maintain her own position through her own efforts. Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa all helped Britain in the conflict against Germany. Britain was bound to continue the struggle until Germany had ceded her Pacific Empire and South-West Africa to them.

Britain was no less bound to find Russia compensation; though Russia, with her enormous geographical extent, could expand in many directions. In the first four months of the war Britain was willing to acknowledge Russia's right to expansion in Europe. This was the magnet that was to keep Russia locked in her struggle with Germany. After December, 1914, Russia's military weakness made it unlikely that she would be able to wrest territories from the Central Powers, and Grey strove to substitute her ambitions in Europe with claims against Turkey.

While Britain sought security against German aggression, she had no desire to endanger the Empire by allowing France, Russia and Japan wax too powerful. In Africa, Persia and the Far East, the Government endeavoured to check the ascendency of Britain's allies.

While Britain went to war for limited ends, her leaders underestimated the extent to which the war itself would create new international problems. They hoped and believed that violence would do its work quickly and efficiently. This miscalculation would be incredible were it not for the fact that the limited war strategists of our own day have also failed to

recognise that war is a vehicle for rapid social and international change and disorder. In the early part of the First World War, Grey and his colleagues were able to consider the problem of the peace settlement on a pragmatic basis. As the war went on, the stability of the international system began to disintegrate: a wider and more complex range of problems had to be pondered. The war ceased to be an instrument for defending the harmony of the pre-war world: from it had to be forged new patterns of comity and of order.

Lord Acton, in a lecture given twenty years before the First World War, passed commend on British war aims in the War of the Spanish Succession.

> "In one of his last conversations William (III) had said: 'We seek nothing but the security which comes from the balance of power.' Our policy was not maintained throughout on that exalted level."
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This is a more fitting epithet to the development of British war aims in the First World War than any which this author could conjure.

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1 Acton, p.244.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

These notes are not intended to be exhaustive or complete. They are offered as a guide and supplement to the text. The author has assumed some basic knowledge on the reader's part, and has not thought it necessary to make any comment on men who are (even now) well-known.

ANDERSON, Sir John. (1858-1918).

Civil Servant. Educated, Aberdeen University; Permanent-Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, 1911-1916.

ASQUITH, Emma Alice Margaret (known as Margot), Countess of Oxford and Asquith. (1864-1945).

Margot does not lend herself to short notes, she was larger than life. The daughter of a partially self-made Scottish landowner, she became a prominent society figure in the 1880's. She owed her notoriety to her high spirits, her cutting turn of phrase, and, one suspects, a liking for the company of the great and powerful. She took an active (and perhaps too active) interest in her husband's career. Her memoirs achieved a certain succés de scandale.

BALFOUR, A.J., Earl of Balfour (1848-1930).

Philosopher and Statesman. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. M.P.1876; President Local Government Board, 1885; Chief Secretary for

Ireland, 1887; Leader of the House of Commons, 1891; Leader of House of Commons and First Lord of Treasury, 1895-1902. Prime Minister, 1902-1905. From November, 1914, he attended the War Council; First Lord of the Admiralty, May, 1915 - December,1916 ; Foreign Secretary, 1916-1919; Lord President of the Council, 1919-1922; Lord President of the Council, 1925-1929.

BENCKENDORFF, Alexander (1849-1917).

Russian Diplomatist. Ambassador at London, 1903-1917.

BERNSTORFF, Heinrich, Graf von. (1862-1939)

German Diplomatist. Ambassador at Washington, 1908-1917.

BERTIE, Sir Francis, 1st Viscount Baron of Thame. (1844-1919).

Diplomatist. Educated Eton. British Ambassador at Paris, 1905-1919.

BETHMANN HOLLWEG, Theobald von. (1856-1921).

German Statesman. German Chancellor, 1909-1917.

BUCHANAN, Sir George (1854-1924)

Diplomatist. Educated Wellington College. Ambassador at St.Petersburg, 1910-1918; Ambassador at Rome, 1919-1921.

BURNS, John Elliot (1858-1942).

Trades Unionist and Politician. Education, self taught. M.P.1892; President of Local Government Board, 1905-1914.

CAMBON, Paul (1843-1924)

French Diplomatist. Ambassador at Madrid, 1886; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1890; Ambassador at London, 1898-1920.

CHIROL, Sir (Ignatius) Valentine (1852-1929)

Traveller, journalist and author. Educated in France and Germany, and at the Sorbonne. Clerk at Foreign Office, 1872-1878; Correspondent of the Times, 1892-1912; Employed by the Foreign Office during the war.

CLERK, Sir George Russell (1874-1951)

Diplomatist. Educated Eton and New College, Oxford. Clerk at Foreign Office 1899. Assistant Clerk, 1907; 1st Secretary at Constantinople, 1910; Senior Clerk, 1913; Private Secretary to Curzon, 1919; First Minister at Prague, 1919-1926; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1926-1933; Ambassador at Brussells, 1933-1934; Ambassador at Paris, 1934-1937. According to Vansittart, "one of these coming men who never arrives."

CREWE, Marquess of, Crewe-Milner, Robert Offley (1858-1945)

Statesman. Educated, Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Viceroy for Ireland, 1892-1895; Leader of the House of Lords, 1908-1916; Secretary of State for Colonies, 1908-1910; Lord Privy Seal, 1908-1911, and 1912-1915; Secretary of State for India, 1910-1915; Lord President of the Council, 1915; President of Board of Education, 1916.

CROWE, Sir Eyre (1864-1925)

Diplomatist. Educatad, Gymnasia at Dusseldorff and Berlin; Entered Foreign Office, 1885; Assistant Under Secretary, 1912; Permanent Under Secretary, 1920.

DE BUNSEN, Sir Maurice (1852-1932)

Diplomatist. Educated, Rugby and Christ Church College, Oxford; entered F.O., 1877; Ambassador at Vienna, 1913-1914; Chairman of the Inter-Departmental Committee on British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, Spring, 1915.

DELCASSÉ, Theophile (1856-1923)

French Statesman. Minister for Colonies, 1894-1895) Foreign Minister, 1898-1905; Minister of Marine 1911-1913; Ambassador at St.Petersburg, 1913; Foreign Minister, August, 1914-October, 1915.

DOUMERGUE, Gaston (1863-1937)

French Statesman. Minister for Colonies, 1902-1905; Vice President of the Chamber, 1905-1906; Minister of Commerce, 1906-1908; Minister for "L'Instruction Publique 1909-1910; President of the Council and Foreign Minister, 1913-1914.

DRUMMOND, Sir Eric, 16th Earl of Perth (1876-1951)

Diplomatist. Educated Eton. Entered Foreign Office, 1900; Private Secretary to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1908-1910; précis writer for Grey, 1910-1911; one of the Prime Minister's Private Secretaries, 1912-1915; Private Secretary to Foreign Secretary, 1915-1919; Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1919-1933; British Ambassador to Italy, 1933-1939; Chief Adviser on Foreign publicity, Ministry of Information, 1939-1940.

MASTER OF ELIBANK, Alexander Murray(1870-1920)

Politician. Educated, Cheltenham; 1910-1912, Liberal Chief Whip. Elibank joined Lord Crowdray's oil firm, S.Pearson and Son in 1912 and worked in London and Paris from 1912 to November, 1915. He kept up his political connections and was used in an unofficial capacity by the Foreign Office and Asquith and Lloyd George - see, Murray, Hon.A.C.M. Master and Brother (1945), p.162.

ESHER, Viscount, Brett, Reginald Balliol (1852-1930)

Government official. Educated Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. M.P. 1880-1885; Secretary for Works, 1895; Member of Elgin Commission, 1903; Chairman of War Office Reconstruction Committee (Esher Committee) 1903-1904; Permanent Member of Committee of Imperial Defence, 1905; During the First World War was used as a sort of liaison officer between London and the French Army.

FIDDES, Sir George Vandeleur (1858-1937)

Educated, Dulwich College, Brasenose College, Oxford; Assistant Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 1909-1916; Permanent Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 1916-1921.

FITZMAURICE, Lord Edmond, Petty-Fitzmaurice, 1st Baron Fitzmaurice of Leigh (1846-1935).

Statesman. Younger son of the Earl of Shelbourne, later 4th Marquess of Lansdowne, brother of 5th Marquess of Lansdowne. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Unlike his brother, he stayed with the Liberal Party after 1886. Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1905-1908; Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster, 1905-1909.

GOSCHEN, Rt.Hon.Sir William Edward, 1st Baronet (1847-1924)

Diplomatist. Educated, Rugby and Oxford; Ambassador at Berlin, 1908-1914.

HALDANE, Richard Burdon, 1st Viscount Haldane of Cloan (1856-1928)

Statesman, Philosopher and Barrister. Educated, Edinburgh Academy and Edinburgh and Göttingen Universities. M.P., 1885; Secretary of State for War, 1905-1912; Lord Chancellor, 1912-1915; Lord Chancellor, 1924.

HARCOURT, Lewis, 1st Viscount. (1863-1922)

Statesman. Educated, Eton. Harcourt was a devoted secretary to his father and only became an M.P. at the age of 40. First Commissioner of Works, 1905-1910; Secretary of State for Colonies, 1910-1915.

HARDINGE, Charles, Baron Hardinge of Penshurst (1858-1944)

Diplomatist and Statesman. Educated, Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge; entered Foreign Office, 1880; Attaché at Constantinople, 1881-1884; Third Secretary at Berlin, 1885; Washington, 1886; Chargé d'Affaires at Sofia, 1887-1889; Second Secretary at Constantinopl., 1889-1893. Head of Chancery at Paris, 1893-1896; First Secretary at Teheran, 1896-1898; Secretary at St.Petersburg, 1898-1903; Assistant Under Secretary at Foreign Office 1903-1906; Permanent Under Secretary at Foreign Office 1906-1910; Viceroy of India, 1910-1916; Permanent Under Secretary at Foreign Office, 1916-1920; Ambassador at Paris, 1920-1922.

HOUSE, Edward Mandell (1858-1938)

Adviser and Envoy of President Wilson.

HOWARD? Sir Esme, 1st Baron Howard of Penrith (1836-1939)

Diplomatist. Educated, Harrow. Entered Diplomatic Service, 1885.

Ambassador at Stockholm, 1913-1918.

HOWARD, Sir Henry (1843-1921)

Diplomatist. Minister Plenipotentiary in British Mission to Holy See, 1914-1916.

ISWOLSKY, Alexander (1856-1919)

Russian Diplomatist and Statesman. Foreign Minister, 1906-10; Ambassador at Paris, 1910-1917.

JACOW, Gottlieb von. (1863-1935)

German Statesman. Ambassador at Rome, 1905-1913; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1913-1916.

KUHLMANN, Richard von. (1873-1948)

German diplomatist and Statesman.

Counseller at Embassy in London, 1908-1914; 1914-1916, Minister at the Hague; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1916; Foreign Minister, 1917-1918.

LEE, Sir Henry Austin (1847-1918)

Diplomatist. Educated, Elizabeth College, Guernsey, and Pembroke College, Oxford; entered Foreign Office, 1870; Commercial Attache to Belgium, Switzerland and France.

LICHNOVSKY, Prince Karl Max. (1860-1928)

German Diplomatist. Ambassador at London, 1912-1914.

LOREBURN, Earl of, Reid, Robert Threshie (1846-1923)

Politician. Educated at Cheltenham and Balliol College, Oxford; M.P.,1880; Solicitor General, 1894; Lord Chancellor 1905-1912.

MASTERMAN, Charles Frederick (1874-1927)

Politician. Educated, Weymouth College and Christ's College, Cambridge; M.P., 1906; Under Secretary at Local Government Board, 1908-1914; Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster, 1914-1915.

MALLET, Sir Louis du Pon (1864-1936)

Diplomatist. Entered Foreign Office 1885; precis writer to Lansdowne, 1903-1905; Private Secretary to Grey, 1905-1907; Assistant Under Secretary, 1907-1913; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1913-1914.

McKENNA, Reginald (1863-1943)

Politician. Educated, King's College School and Trinity College, Cambridge; M.P.1895; President of Board of Education, 1907; First Lord of Admiralty, 1908-1911; 1911-1915; Home Secretary; 1915-1916, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

MOREL, Edmund D. (1873-1924)

Journalist, politician and Secretary of Union of Democratic Control. Educated, Eastbourne; founded Congo Reform Association, 1904; Secretary of U.D.C. 1914-1924; M.P. 1922-1924.

MORLEY, John, 1st Viscount Blackburn (1838-1923)

Statesman and man of letters. Educated at Cheltenham College and Lincoln College, Oxford; M.P.1883; Secretary of State for India, 1905-1910; Lord President of Council, 1910-1914; Resigned in August, 1914.

NICOLSON, Sir Arthur, 1st Baron Carnock (1849-1928)

Diplomatist. Educated, Rugby and Brasenose College, Oxford; entered Foreign Office, 1870; British Delegate to Algeciras Conference; Ambassador to Russia, 1906-1910; Permanent Under Secretary, 1910-1916.

NOEL-BUXTON, Noel Edward, 1st Baron Buxton (1869-1948)

Politician. Educated, Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge; M.P.1905, lost seat 1906; M.P.1910.

O'BIERNE, Hugh James (1866-1916)

Diplomatist. Educated, Beaumont and Balliol College, Oxford; Counsellor at St.Petersburg Embassy, 1906-1916.

OLIPHANT, Sir Lancelot (1881-1965)

Diplomatist. Entered Foreign Office, 1903; Acting 3rd Secretary in

Diplomatic Service, 1905; Assistant Secretary, Foreign Office, 1920; Assistant Under Secretary, 1927-1936; Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; 1936-1939; Ambassador to Belgium, 1939.

OPPENHEIMER, Sir Francis (1870-1961)

Educated, Lycée Frankfurt, and Balliol, Oxford. Consul-General at Frankfurt, 1900-1911; Commercial Attaché for Northern and Central Europe (with acting rank of Counsellor in Diplomatic Service), 1911-1914. During the war sent to the Hague and to Switzerland to deal with the blockade question.

PAGE, Walter H. (1855-1918)

Journalist and diplomatist. American Ambassador in London, 1913-1918.

POINCARÉ, Raymond (1860-1934)

French Statesman. President, 1912-1920.

PONSONBY, Arthur Augustus William Henry, 1st Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede (1871-1946)

Politician and author. Educated, Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Entered Foreign Office, 1894; Brivate Secretary to Campbell-Bannerman, 1906-1908; M.P., 1908-1918; Lost seat 1918; Joined Labour Party; M.P., 1922-1930; Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1924; Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary at Ministry of Transport, 1929-1931; raised to peerage, 1930; Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster, 1931; Leader of Opposition in the House of Lords, 1931-1935.

RODD, James Rennell, 1st Baron Rennell Rodd (1858-1941)

Diplomatist. Educated at Haileybury and Balliol College, Oxford. Ambassador at Rome, 1908-1919.

RUMBOLD, Sir Horace George Montagu, 9th Baronet (1869-1941)

Diplomatist. Educated, Eton. Entered Diplomatic Service 1891; 1913-1914, Counsellor of Berlin Embassy; At Foreign Office, 1914-1916; Minister at Berne, 1916-1919; Minister at Warsaw, 1919-20; Ambassador to Turkey, 1920; Deputy to Curzon at the Lausanne Conference, 1922-1923, and Chief delegate to second Lausanne Conference, 1923; Ambassador at Madrid, 1924-1928; Ambassador at Berlin, 1928-1933.

RUNCIMAN, Walter, 1st Viscount Runciman of Dixford (1870-1949)

Statesman. Educated, South Shield High School, privately, Trinity College, Cambridge; M.P.1899; Parliamentary Secretary to Local Government Board, 1905-1908; Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1908-1911; President of Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1911-1914; President of the Board of Trade, 1914.

SAMUEL, Herbert Louis, 1st Viscount (1870-1963)

Educated, University College School, Balliol College, Oxford; Postmaster-General, 1910-1914, and 1915-1916; President of Local Government Board, 1914-1915.

SAZANOW, Sergei Dmitrievich (1861-1927)

Russian diplomatist and statesman. Foreign Minister, 1910-1916.

SCOTT, Charles Prestwich (1846-1934)

Journalist. Educated Clapham Grammar School and Corpus Christi, Oxford. Editor of Manchester Guardian, 1872-1929.

SETON-WATSON, Robert William (1879-1951)

Educated, Winchester and New College. Devoted student of Central European and Balkan history and politics.

SIMON, John Allsebrook, 1st Viscount (1873-1954)

Educated, Fettes College, Edinburgh, Wadham College, Oxford; M.P., 1906; Solicitor General, 1910-1913; Attorney-General with seat in Cabinet, 1913-1915; Home Secretary, 1915-1916; Foreign Secretary, 1931-1935; Home Secretary, 1935-1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1937-1940; Lord Chancellor, 1940-1945.

SPENDER, John Alfred (1862-1942)

Journalist and author. Educated, Bath College and Balliol College, Oxford; Editor of Westminster Gazette, 1896-1922.

SPERLING, Sir Reginald Arthur (1874-1965)

Educated, Eton and New College; Clerk at the Foreign Office, 1899; Senior Clerk, 1913; Assistant Secretary, 1919; Minister at Berne, 1924-1927; Minister at Sofia, 1925-1928; Minister at Helsingfors, 1930-1935.

SPRING-RICE, Sir Cecil (1859-1918)

Diplomatist. Educated, Eton and Balliol College, Oxford; entered Foreign Office, 1882; Ambassador at Washington, 1913-1918.

STEED, Henry Wickham (1871-1956)

Journalist. Educated, Sudbury Grammar School and Jena, Berlin and Paris Universities. Acting Correspondent of the Times in Rome, 1896; Correspondent of the Times in Berlin, 1896-1902; at Vienna, 1902-1913; Foreign Editor Times, 1914-1919; Editor of the Times, 1919-1922; Lecturer in Central European History, King's College, London, 1925-1938.

STRACHEY, John St. Loe (1860-1927)

Journalist, Educated, privately and Balliol College, Oxford; Editor of the Spectator, 1898-1925.

STRACHEY, Giles Lytton, (1880-1932)

Critic and biographer. Educated at Leamington College, Liverpool University, and Trinity College, Cambridge.

TYRRELL, William George, 1st Baron Tyrrell of Avon (1866-1947)

Diplomatist. Educated in Germany and at Balliol College, Oxford; entered Foreign Office, 1899; précis writer for Grey, 1905-1907; Grey's Private Secretary, 1907-1915; Head of Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, 1918; Permanent Under Secretary, 1925; Ambassador at Paris, 1928-1934.

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Int.Bez. Die Internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus.

B. OFFICIAL PAPERS

CAB. Cabinet Office.

F.O. Foreign Office.

C.O. Colonial Office.

H.O. Home Office.

C. PRIVATE PAPERS

Asquith	Bodleian Library.
Balfour	British Museum and Public Record Office.
Bertie	Public Record Office.
Burns	British Museum.
Carnock	Public Record Office.
Cecil, Lord Robert	British Museum and Public Record Office.
Cromer	Public Record Office.

Grey	Public Record Office.
Haldane	National Library of Scotland.
Hardinge	Cambridge University Library.
Kitchener	Public Record Office.
Lloyd George	Beaverbrook Library.
Morel	London School of Economics.
Paget, Sir Ralph	British Museum.
Ponsonby, Arthur	In possession of Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede.
Robertson	King's College, London.
Samuel	Public Record Office of the House of Lords.
Scott	British Museum.
Spender	British Museum.
Strachey, St.Loe	Spectator Offices, 99 Gower Street.
Webb, Beatrice	London School of Economics. (The Diaries by kind permission of the Passfield Trust.

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D. PRINTED SOURCES.

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